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Spring • 1954

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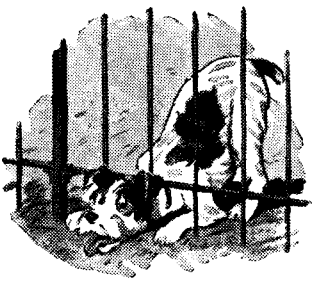

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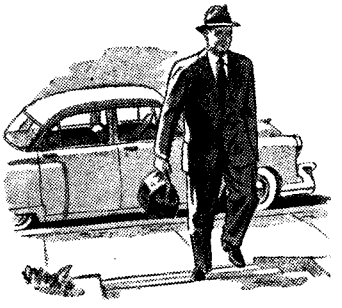

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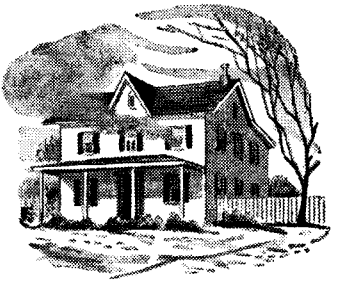

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
VOLUME 23 *Spring, 1954* NUMBER 2

A Modest Proposal for the Care and Use of Subversives

ALAN VALENTINE

OUR GREAT DEMOCRACY IS KNOWN by all right-minded men to be only a little short of perfection. Only the faults of other nations and the infiltration of foreign ideas have delayed our achievement of the ideal society. The existence within our boundaries of un-American thought and activities is one of those temporary flaws derived from the influences to which our generosity in Europe and Asia has exposed us. But though the problem came from overseas, its solution must be in the American spirit of freedom, and how to detect and deal with subversives is troubling and dividing American society.

More penetrating minds than my own have wrestled with this problem in the halls of Congress and elsewhere, and it is only a fortunate accident which enables me to offer a constructive solution. After wearying myself for many months with vain, idle and visionary speculations upon this subject, I happily recalled a proposal made in 1729 by the Dean of St. Patrick's to solve a difficult problem in Ireland. An overproduction of Irish babies was resulting in an Irish form of technological unemployment called wholesale starvation. Thinking in extraordinarily modern economic con-

✪ ALAN VALENTINE, former president of the University of Rochester, has served as chief of the Economic Cooperation Administration Mission to the Netherlands, administrator of Economic Stabilization, president of the Committee for Free Asia, and chairman of the National Survey of Medical Education.

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cepts, Dean Swift proposed that instead of a futile battle with the procreative propensities of the Irish, their productive talents be given incentive payments by offering parents a good price for their babies—if well nurtured and succulent—who would then provide an added delicacy to the tables of their landlords.

The genius of the suggestion was that it would turn a national problem into a national asset, adding to the pleasure and profit of everyone—parents and consumers alike. Approaching our own problem of subversives in that ingenious and lofty spirit, I have arrived at a happy solution. Since my plan is aimed at efficient use of our manpower (a primary aim of American democracy), it cannot be condemned as original and hence undemocratic. Indeed, it is merely a logical extension of the ideas and procedures of our present leading exponents of Americanism, especially those of our greatest defender of the narrow faith, our valiant Torquemada of tall corn, the Senator whose passion for investigation knows no bounds.

By observing him I have come to see the issue more clearly and to realize that the subversive is only one example of the failure of American society to achieve full unity of ideas and convictions. It is true that we are of late making substantial progress in that direction, for the newer methods of education, advertising and security investigation are helping us win the fight toward the full mental uniformity of all free men. Good citizens are recognizing that deference to popular opinion is their highest civic virtue, that he who questions the wisdom of the majority is unworthy of their tolerance, that private doubts cannot be harbored in democratic society. But there still remain, alas, intransigent reactionaries devoted to an outworn liberal tradition; there are still some self-opinionated descendants of Voltaire and Thomas Paine, and our universities still give asylum to perverse professors who are confirmed addicts of independent thought. Were it not for them, the nation might already have attained full cerebral standardization.

Unfortunately the problem has become newly complicated by a reluctance to insist upon mental conformity simply because Russia has done so. Our intelligent public is only beginning to see that if conformity has made Russia efficient it will make us more efficient

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still, that we must be broad-minded and not ignore a virtue simply because Satan boasts it too. We must put the higher good of efficiency before the high good of differing from the Slavs. We would not be imitating them, for ours is the willing conformity of free men, not that conformity forced upon ignorant Asians who do not know its full value. If we Americans really put our hearts into it, we can easily out-conform the Russians.

If our sovereign masses have a fault (which I do not admit), it has been an overmeticulous desire for fair play. They have tried to distinguish between degrees of nonconformity and to separate political subversives from original thinkers. The generous hearts of our people have obscured their logic, for in the challenge to democratic unity there is no basic distinction between the subversive and the nonconformist. Both seek to undermine the right of the majority to determine all opinion. Just as there can be no national security if a single suspected Communist goes unharassed, so there can be no national unity if any man is allowed to challenge the standard ideology of free men. When the president of Harvard rejects the wisdom of Senatorial advice as to how to administer Harvard, he corrupts majority ethics just as much as if he had invoked the Fifth Amendment.

We must make a broader definition of subversion that will include all nonconformists. This will save us from present bickering, uncertainty and government expense. But we must go further and act upon that definition in a nation-wide Crusade of the People. We cannot hope that a mere handful of devoted and farseeing patriots in Congress can alone track down and ruthlessly stamp out every original idea, or every association with any man who ever had one. No, the thought control essential to national unity demands a national organization. It should operate outside the courts, for experience has shown that free men can best destroy opposition to unity of thought if they are not subject to legal conventions. It must be a grass-roots movement in which every man shall take responsibility for the conformity of all the rest. That is the essence of our modern democracy, and men whose ancestors left their plows and tapped their powder horns must now leave their television sets and tap their neighbors' wires. Already, patriotic

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little groups are springing up, armed with suspicion and subpoenas and eager to accuse their neighbors of un-Americanism. This movement could go far.

Just as the definition of the subversive must be made more all-inclusive, the modern doctrine of guilt by association should be extended. In matters of conformity, every citizen must be like Caesar's wife. Independent ideas can be driven out only if those who are suspected of harboring them are put into Coventry by every right-thinking conformist and if the penalty for association with nonconformists is automatic and drastic. Subversives would then be able to talk and live only with other subversives, and would thus be easier to identify.

The American treatment of suspected subversives has been legally circumspect. In their desire to see that no injustice is done, Congressional committees are as scrupulous as the Inquisitors of the Middle Ages. If the medieval suspect could walk on red-hot plowshares without being burned, he was declared innocent. If the accused before the modern committee can emerge from the fire of investigation without injury to health, reputation or spirit, he may rejoin society. The modern ordeal protects society more carefully than the plowshare, for the accused man's chance of emerging unscathed is a little less good, and if he does so the committee still takes no position on his innocence. The committees also temper their justice with mercy and follow the most modern sociological humanitarianism. Minor offenders against uniformity of opinion are regarded as mentally unwell rather than deliberately vicious. Their mild penalties are meant to be corrective, with the hope that they can ultimately purge themselves of all original thought and return to membership in civilized society. Committees do not resort to Communist brain-washing; they leave such correctives to the gentle, informal influences of a conformist society.

All this has been progress, but my proposals face the issue more realistically. It is not likely that many of these sick men will ever throw off entirely the infection of intellectual independence, for its virus has been tolerated for generations in the blood stream of the body politic. Its victims are not normal citizens and cannot be permitted to circulate and spread their contagion among healthy

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men. Until their local loyalty boards pronounce them fully cured, they must be designated second-class citizens. Obviously their right to vote must be withdrawn. Their type of employment must be regulated; their homes and families must be segregated. This is necessary not only to prevent their contaminating their neighbors but to maintain real-estate values in the better neighborhoods. Intermarriage between their children and those of first-class citizens must of course be banned.

At first it seemed to me that such mental invalids should not be permitted to reproduce their kind and thus jeopardize the welfare of future free society. But here I encountered practical difficulties. The emotions of youth are powerful in these matters, and no measure short of the sterilization of all second-class citizens under seventy would be sufficiently effective. Yet this would offend our sense of justice, for the door must be left open to their possible return (remote though it may be) to the privileges of full citizenship, of which unlicensed reproduction is at present one. Science has not yet developed a sure means of the temporary sterilization of an un-co-operative young man, and I am therefore obliged to postpone this recommendation until our biologists have solved the problem.

Meanwhile, the situation can be kept in hand. Since most of our subversives are intellectuals, who are notoriously poor breeders, the magnitude of the danger is somewhat diminished. Moreover, the incomes of suspected subversives will naturally become small and their living conditions subnormal. Their children, we can with confidence assume, will be inferior in attractiveness to the other sex, and their financial capacity to pursue courtship under American mating standards will be inadequate. Their low nutrition (I am assured by a distinguished doctor who has long studied the effects of inadequate diet on fruit flies) can be depended upon to make them below average in reproductive capacity. They and their children will be associating with first-class citizens of the vulnerable age only under restrictions like those informally established for Chinese, Jews and Negroes. Our society has already demonstrated its capacity to deal with inferior citizens of other races, and should have no trouble in controlling subversives and nonconformists along traditional lines.

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But since these second-class citizens will not be recognized as easily as earlier segregated groups by their color, accents or features (indeed, a few of them are surprisingly normal in appearance), some distinguishing mark must be placed upon them. I had first thought they should all be required to wear some distinctive uniform. We have found this an effective way of identifying convicts, but the striped regalia of Sing Sing is effective only within narrow limits or prison walls, and is discarded with celerity when opportunity permits. Our numerous nonconformists cannot be thus confined and watched without great expense to society; and to dress them as we dress convicts would be rightly resented by the latter, since thieves and murderers, in spite of their legal peccadilloes, are often completely loyal and unoriginal citizens. On practical grounds, as well as in fairness to our criminal class, I was obliged to discard my plan of a compulsory uniform for subversives. This decision greatly disappointed my dear wife, who, forgetting the object in view, had drawn sketches of an all-too-fetching ensemble in red for female subversives.

Turning to the wisdom of the East, I recalled that India has had her own untouchables, who wear special marks upon their foreheads. At first this seemed a perfect solution, but again objections arose. India's present leaders say they have abolished the caste system. At a time when friendship with Asians is sought on any terms, we would be undiplomatic to imitate a custom officially nonexistent and possibly on the decline. We must do nothing that would shake the faith of Asians in our moral leadership. But I have hit upon another scheme that will please the common man, and must therefore be the right one. The plan is not perfect, for it is not completely inflexible, but it will serve both to brand present subversives and to discourage future ones.

Our democratic society has tolerated within itself an organization of dubious value and intent. It sets its members apart from the rest of society by a devotion to the intellectual. It professes standards higher than the popular ones, and looks down upon the mental attitudes of nonthinking good citizens. It has deliberately encouraged humanism without regard to its danger to the mechanical efficiency of democracy. It has fostered research in fields where

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new ideas can only be disruptive of established convictions. In the single stroke I propose, this organization could be properly discredited and second-class citizens appropriately branded. I therefore recommend that every man and woman, from the moment that his or her orthodoxy is first called into question, be compelled to wear conspicuously, at all hours of the day and night, the square golden key of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Mindful of the need to cut down the costs of government, this recommendation is attractive as an economy measure. Society would be relieved of most of the costs of these keys by the fact that many of the accused already possess them.

The proper punitive measure should not only protect society from its subversives but make them useful to it. We must respect the efficiency of the Russians, for though slave labor camps may not appeal to us, they have turned Russia's political opponents into economic assets. We should adopt their principle while we deplore their method. After all, the only reasonable objections of free men to the Russian solution are that it undercuts the just wages of labor by unpaid competition, and that it makes use only of the muscles of subversives, which are usually below par, and neglects to utilize their mental abilities, which are sometimes surprisingly normal. America can find a more efficient way, and at minimum cost to the state. There is one profession which is almost perfectly adapted to our need for some useful punitive service. Its members are already segregated from the rest of society; they are demonstrably devoid of new and dangerous ideas; they serve a minor but useful function; and they are paid at society's lowest rates. I refer of course to our schoolteachers.

Our second-class subversives could wisely be sentenced to the teaching of American youth. In that function their physical limitations would be the smallest handicap, and their intellectual interest of some slight value if properly restricted. Teaching in the schools would set them apart from first-class citizens: their low wages would isolate them economically, and their tendency to cerebrate would make them undesirable socially. Society could thus get all this necessary hack work done at the usual low cost, which could be still further reduced if that could be done and some

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degree of life and vigor still sustained. Present teachers not themselves accused of unorthodoxy could then assume other low-level work previously done by the subversives—such as diplomacy, public service, research and the arts—or would be freed to aspire to the wages and social standing of plumbers and subway guards.

To some, this proposal might seem unwise, for there is a vestigial opinion that schoolteachers are influential and that their characters should be impeccable. The most superficial investigation will prove this tradition to be an outworn fallacy. A retired superintendent of schools in a large Eastern city, now happily engaged as a houseman and chauffeur in a very respectable home in Greenwich, Connecticut, assures me that in his long educationist experience he has never known a successful American businessman to give serious weight to the opinions of a schoolteacher. He is, of all people, the one whom boys and girls are least likely to believe or imitate. Nowhere else in society would our subversives offer less danger of contaminating our youth. They would not, of course, be allowed to coach athletics, for in that capacity they would influence our future leaders; and it might be necessary to exclude them from the sciences, in which many young people are interested. But in the routine drudgery of the liberal arts and social studies they could be of no possible danger.

Further safeguards could be set up if desired. No second-class citizen would be allowed to become a principal or superintendent, for such men are influential because they deal with budgets and are paid more than an intellectual with an original mind could be worth. Each teacher could be held responsible for the docility of all the rest, a democratic device already used in the schools and enhanced by the brilliant concept of guilt by association. Of course no subversives would be allowed to write for publication or to make speeches outside the classroom. The single exception would be in the case of approved confessions of earlier unorthodoxy.

Although a few of our subversives might have no qualifications to teach or no interest in youth, this has already been found to be no handicap to schoolteachers. The cost of education would be reduced; subversives would be properly identified and segregated; their work would be its own punishment; and the society of first-

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class citizens would gain unity by the elimination of any who questioned the ideas established by the chairmen of Congressional committees on Americanism. The current shortage of teachers could be readily remedied, for if more were needed in any community, its local loyalty board need only broaden its definition of subversion to recruit additional ones.

I confess to some pride in having hit upon this fair, cheap and easy method of making our subversives useful members of the commonwealth while at the same time emasculating them for the propagation of iconoclasm. The measures I propose would result in the founding of a powerful new federal agency which might reasonably be headed by him who conceived them. Nothing is further from my ambitions, for those who know me know my modesty, which has always partly obscured my talents. It is not the American Way to push oneself forward or to confuse public welfare with private interest. I leave with confidence to the sense of gratitude of my fellow-citizens the determination of the capacity in which I might serve this great cause.

Some may think my proposed treatment of subversives too soft: to them I can only reply that it is better to be too lenient than to risk the slightest injustice to individuals or impairment of the spirit of personal freedom. The maintenance of our Bill of Rights must always be our paramount concern. But I am not so violently bent upon my own opinions as to reject any suggestions for their improvement, provided they come from unimpeachable sources. A humble deference to the opinions of his fellows is the mark of a free man.

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POEMS

by MELVILLE CANE

Above and Below

Bereft of speech, debarred from words,
Despite, the underprivileged birds
Explore the octaves of the sky
With metric sweep, with rhythmic cry,
Carolling to earthly ears
The earthless cadence of the spheres.

While far below, the songless cows
Forever munch, forever browse,
Forever heave their heavy girth
Inexorably bound to earth,
And out of patient moos and lows
Compose their paragraphs of prose.

by DAVID MORTON

Something . . . At Night

It is not rain—he knows the sound of rain;
This is another thing, and not good,
Not drink for roots, for grasses, thirsting, not
Water in any wise, friendly and plain,
In ways known and familiar. This is what,
At night, man cannot name—or if he could
Would not, lest, in the stillness, the thing hear,
And come, like a thing called, into the room,
Immense and monstrous, evil, and too near,
And known, at last, as self, the explicit doom.

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It was a small thing in himself, ignored
And left to pasture on the innocent, sweet
Herbs of the succulent summers . . . May the Lord
Have mercy on us, listening to the feet
Nearing the room from the great dark, a sound
That knows—none better—where we may be found:

The man himself coming to find himself,
Who cannot hide, longer, beneath the covers:
Not behind masks, not in narcotic pages
Of any book he reaches from the shelf
—Romancing poets and deluded sages
Telling of the old heavens, of the happy lovers;—
No hiding, now, not even in his love,
The small and white beside him, and asleep;
Not in the Lord he prayed his soul to keep,
That was not kept . . . He hears the sound thereof,
Not to be named aloud, not if he could,
Something at night, and near, not rain, not good.

by JON SWAN

A Wonder in the World

(After Yeats, *His Phoenix*)

There's a woman we have seen who in a bath of gold
Turned with a mirror in her hand, turned with constant eyes
Watching her beauty, like low evening swallows that behold
Reflected heaven in a pool. Another, whose wise
Husband, wanting to keep like coin or property
The slanting smile of her gaze, was ready to pay,
That days and men might praise his choice and feel their poverty:
I know a wonder in the world so let these have their day.

America now has such production you can see a row
Of women, the glory of our age, identically glow
When cameras come and pop and go. And more ripe Helens grow

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In California's sun than old Homer with his slow
Immortal pen could write into eternity.
For those at home, invading loveliness in white and grey
Astounds a screen, stands blistering its beauty in your eye:
I know a wonder in the world so let these have their day.

There'll be that crowd of splendor: women to talk stars and flight
Into the darkest hour, some making modest men capsize
Security, but none to match as well my Beauty's glance, her bright
Being, who holds a dawn of wonder in her April eyes,
And agile laughter; the explorer's discontent and that proud gaze
As though she met the burning sun for company—
Of her I sing, before this heaven's gift high-homeward strays:
I know a wonder in the world so let them have their day.

Concert

Not posted on the program,
But intermittent heard
Through windows and propriety,
Some triumphant bird

Chorales before Sebastian sang;
His flute before the Flood,
A little company attends,
But of them one is God.

Whom Shall He Welcome?

Suddenly when death decides
We meet our Father in the sky;
He shakes our hand, then inquires
If we can fly.

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Some walk to him on stairs of gold,
Or ride the back of people's praise,
Or pay a pension up to heaven
For later days,

But only one or maybe few
Know such a spendthrift soul that rose
From weightlessness and by surprise:
He chooses those.

by LAURA LAKE

Lines to a Color

Warm as children's mittens made by a grandmother,
It floods the veins of geraniums along the brick wall;
On the cherry table, apples swim in light,
And nine steps down in the strawberry patch, cardinals
Stir and feed and sing among the lime green stems.
In the clovered field, a mare and a stallion clash
Against a whitewashed fence, paw the air
And race, electric-tailed, to summer barns;
While under the shade of a holly berry tree, dances
A girl with lips like wild rose haws, and in
The fire of her hair burns this color I love.

by LINCOLN FITZELL

Lines to a Friend

Do you recall in Father's day,
How sunlight hit the street,
How big ships going down the bay,
Would make us race and leap?

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The light was warm then after school.
There were no walking dead.
But now time spins a dusty spool,
And chill creeps up the bed.

The same day eats the day before.
We live in backward mind,
Who wrestle fury at the door,
For what was left behind.

✪ Leading magazines have carried the articles, fiction and verse of lawyer and poet MELVILLE CANE. An article by him appeared in the Winter, 1952-53, number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. His latest book is *Making a Poem.*

✪ DAVID MORTON, formerly professor of English at Amherst College, is the author of some twenty volumes of prose and verse. He is now living in the Azores, where he continues to write and teach.

✪ JON SWAN is on the staff of the American Friends Service Committee. These are among his first published poems; another appeared in the Winter, 1953-54, issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

✪ LAURA LAKE has studied sociology at Columbia University, painting at the Art Students' League and writing at the New School for Social Research. The Autumn, 1953, issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR carried another of her poems.

✪ Poems by LINCOLN FITZELL, recipient of the 1937 Shelley Memorial Award, have appeared in several volumes and in many literary magazines here and abroad, including the Summer, 1953, number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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The Practice of Biography

HAROLD NICOLSON

IN AN AGE WHEN, WITHIN A FEW HOURS, men can be transported from Croydon to Khartoum; when children, seated in their own small chairs, can watch Presidents being inaugurated, atomic bombs exploding, or fish with round eyes and muslin fins circling in an aquarium; when experience has transcended imagination and reality has proved more terrible than any phantom —in such an age it is inevitable that the sense of wonder should become atrophied, that the fictional should lose its stimulus, and that people should prefer to read about what happened in the unfrightening past rather than about what may happen in our awful present or future.

The modern propensity to write and read biographies is not, however, due solely to a desire to escape from anxiety. The young men and maidens who, without possessing any compulsive creative gift, think that it would be nice to write a book, are attracted to this form of composition, since it provides them with a ready-made plot, need entail no tremendous energy of research, and enables them to relieve their sensibility without placing too taut a strain upon their imagination. The common reader, for his part, feels that in learning about the adventures, passions and misfortunes of real heroes and heroines he is indulging in no idle relaxation, but is acquiring knowledge, is "teaching himself history." That, when all is said and done, is a commendable thing to feel. For him modern fiction has become so intricate, so self-centered and so cruel that it leaves behind it an after-tone of bewilderment and distress: it is both more comforting and more instructive to read about the past. In this manner biographies accumulate and prosper.

It is noticeable also that in ages of faith, when the minds of men

✪ SIR HAROLD NICOLSON, diplomat and journalist, is particularly well known for his biographies of Tennyson, Byron, Swinburne, Verlaine and George V. He is also the author of *The Development of English Biography*. This article first appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine*, a quarterly publication of John Murray Ltd.

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are fixed upon the eternal verities and the life after death, the practice of biography tends to decline; whereas in the succeeding periods of doubt, speculation and skepticism, the interest in human behavior increases. Thus in the fourteenth century in England, we had all the elements of good biography, whereas in the succeeding century the interest waned; in the sixteenth century again the impulse of curiosity became active and productive, only to recede with the advent of puritanism in the age that followed. Then came the eighteenth century and the phase of enlightened humanism which produced our greatest biographies; whereas with the revival of theological preoccupations in the Victorian epoch, both the demand and the supply declined. The twentieth century should have coincided with a powerful revival of pure biography, but although many books are published, it does not appear that any modern formula has as yet become established.

The ease with which biographies are written and sold today entails a danger that an art so perfectly attuned to the Anglo-Saxon temperament may become inflated. Moreover, the tendency manifested by many elderly ladies and gentlemen to publish autobiographies—hoping thereby to recapture the security of their childhood and to demonstrate the triumph of character over environment—will still further debase this currency. It may therefore be opportune to reconsider whether there do in fact exist any fundamental biographical principles, and to examine what are the perils and illnesses to which the art of biography is by its very nature exposed.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *biography* as "the history of the lives of individual men, as a branch of literature." This excellent definition contains within itself three principles that any serious biographer should observe: A biography must be "history," in the sense that it must be accurate and depict a person in relation to his times; it must describe an "individual," with all the gradations of human character, and not merely present a type of virtue or of vice; and it must be composed as "a branch of literature," in that it must be written in grammatical English and with an adequate feeling for style.

A biography combining all these three principles can be classed

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as a "pure" biography; a biography that violates any one of these principles, or combines them in incorrect proportions, must be classed as an "impure" biography. A pure biography is written with no purpose other than that of conveying to the reader an authentic portrait of the individual whose life is being narrated. A biography is rendered impure when some extraneous purpose intrudes to distort the accuracy of presentation.

Thus Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, although written and composed with consummate mastery, is not a pure biography in that it does not depict an individual character in relation to the background of the times. Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling*, although from the literary point of view his most attractive work, is impure biography since it is not very precise, not a true portrait, and written with a purpose other than that of the direct delineation of an individual. Walton's *Lives* are without question masterpieces of English prose; but they sin against the principles of biography since Walton is not describing human beings, but types of the particular form of quietism that he himself regarded as desirable. Many biographies, on the other hand, are perfectly historical, really do paint, even if with clumsy strokes, the portrait of an individual, but are so badly written that they cannot for one instant qualify as literature. A biography therefore which does not combine all three of these fundamental principles must be defined as impure.

The development of the art throughout the ages shows us how ancient and how recurrent are these "extraneous purposes" by which the purity of biography is infected. There is no better method of isolating the principles of pure biography than to trace the sources of these infections.

The original cause of all biography was the desire to commemorate the illustrious dead. A leader dies; his tribe or family feel that some strength has passed from them; they seek to perpetuate his magic by a monument. Cairns and monoliths arise; we have the regal sites of mighty pyramids; men scale the precipices and engrave a cenotaph upon the rocks of Bisitun; epics and sagas sing the legends of tribal heroes; the wrath of Achilles is rendered im-

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mortal, and to this day men read with elation of the endurance and resource of Ithacan Odysseus; Balder and Beowulf come to swell the paean; the whole world echoes with the praise of famous men. With this epic strain there mingle elegies and laments. Widow-biographies are an early phenomenon: to the *Complaint of Deor* we add *The Wife's Complaint.* This commemorative instinct is bad for pure biography, since it leads the commemorator to concentrate solely upon the strength and virtue of his hero and to omit all weakness or shadow. Endemic, and sometimes epidemic, is this passion for commemoration; it has infected biography throughout the centuries.

The impulse is not primitive only; it operates to this day. It is but natural that when a great man dies, his family should desire that his life should be written in such a manner as to emphasize his nobility and to hide his faults. Even the most enlightened survivors are inclined to entrust the biography of their dead chief not to an outsider who may take too objective a view of his subject, but to some inexpert but loyal member of the family, who can be trusted to suppress all unfavorable truth. Occasionally the widow herself undertakes the task, sometimes with results as fantastic as those of Lady Burton's biography of her erratic but gifted husband. Even when an honest outsider is commissioned, he may be precluded from outspokenness by a laudable desire not to wound the susceptibilities of those to whom he is obliged. An even more curious and subtle effect of such family-inspired biographies is that the author may become influenced by the petty grievances or animosities cherished by the hero or his widow in their later years; instead of creating an impression of greatness he creates an impression of smallness. A classic instance of this unintentional diminution of a hero's character is provided by General Sir C. Callwell's *Life and Letters* of Sir Henry Wilson; there have been others since. The commemorative instinct assuredly operates in devious ways, but it is always perilous to pure biography.

A second extraneous purpose is the didactic purpose. People have always been tempted to take the lives of individual men as examples of virtue, or as cautionary tales indicative of the ill effects of self-indulgence or ambition. Plutarch himself, the father of

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biography, admitted that he chose his characters as types of certain virtues and vices and as examples for emulation or avoidance by the young. Yet Plutarch happened to be a natural biographer in that he was passionately interested in the way that individuals behaved; thus, although his lives of Antony or Alcibiades, for instance, were intended to be cautionary tales, he soon forgot his didactic purpose in the fascination exercised upon his mind by the splendor of Antony or the gaiety of Alcibiades. Flashes of admiration and delight illumine his pages, until both he and his readers forget entirely that an extraneous purpose of moral precept ever existed.

It is not so with other hagiographers. The lives of the saints and martyrs were not, it can be admitted, always intended to be historical accounts of individuals. Yet in more disguised form the didactic purpose continues to intrude upon biography; the desire to teach or preach, the desire to establish examples, the desire to illustrate some moral, theological, political, economic or social theory—all these irrelevant intentions infect biography with strong, and sometimes subtle, doses of impurity. The nineteenth-century biographers were most susceptible to the didactic temptation. "The history of mankind," wrote Carlyle, "is the history of its great men." "To find out these, clean the dirt from them, and to place them on their proper pedestal" appeared to him and his contemporaries a proper function of biography. This doctrine led to such impurities as *The Saintly Lives Series,* in which, among other worthies, Lord Tennyson was portrayed not as he was, but as the sort of laureate that the author felt he ought to be. The reaction against the hagiography of the Victorians led to a development valuable as a corrective, but, in its baser derivatives, damaging to the pure biographic stream. I refer to the introduction by Froude and his successors and imitators of the element of irony.

The satirical attitude of the biographer toward his subject may have come as a relief from the hagiography of the Victorians, but it can easily degenerate into false history and false psychology. Froude certainly provided a true picture of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle; his portraits were condemned by his contemporaries as cynical, disloyal and in shocking bad taste. The influence of Samuel Butler

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came to transform Froude's attitude of negative skepticism into positive derision of conventional legends. Lytton Strachey, with his ironical titters, emerged as the deftest of iconoclasts; yet Strachey, who enjoyed paradox more than he respected precision, and who had little sense of history, exaggerated the lights and shadows of his portraits. His sketches were certainly vivid, personal and well written; but they were not "history" in the sense that pure biography demands. In the hands of his imitators the manner of Strachey deteriorated so rapidly that it became an irritating habit of superciliousness. Philip Guedalla, with his trick of dramatic contrast, diminished the very real value of his writings by too great insistence on antithesis; his pictures became distorted and out of focus.

Irony is, in any case, a dangerous tincture and one that should be applied only with a sable brush; when daubed by vigorous arms it becomes wearisome and even offensive. It is not merely that the reader is irritated by a biographer who implies in chapter after chapter that he is himself more enlightened, sensitive, or sincere than the hero whom he is describing. It is also that biography, if taken seriously, is an exacting task and not one that can be carried through with a sneer. The drudgery of collecting and checking material, the mechanical labor of completing a long book, require an effort more continuous than can be sustained by glimpses of self-satisfaction. The biographer must be constantly fortified by a fundamental respect, or affection, for the person whom he is describing; if all that he experiences is superficial contempt, his work will turn to ashes and his energy wilt and fail. No writer can persist for five hundred pages in being funny at the expense of someone who is dead.

There are other poisons, other temptations, to which this difficult art is liable. Biography is always a collaboration between the author and his subject; always there must be the reflection of one temperament in the mirror of another. The biographer should thus be careful not to permit his own personality to intrude too markedly upon the personality that he is describing; he should be wary of assigning his own opinions, prejudices or affections to the man or woman whose life he writes; he should take special

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pains to deal fairly with views which he does not share, or interests that bore him; his egoism should be muzzled and kept on a chain. He should constantly remind himself that it is not an autobiography that he is composing, but the life of someone else; the statue of Modesty should dominate his study, a finger on her lips.

A further temptation that may afflict the affable biographer is that of adding to his narrative the colors of fiction or romance. He may seek to convey reality by introducing imaginary conversations, or to brighten his pages by inserting really beautiful passages of scenic description:

> As their little cavalcade breasted the hill and emerged from the grove of umbrella pines (*pineus pinea*) that crowned its summit, the fair city lay before them, basking all amethyst in the fading light. The Palazzo Pubblico had already melted into the pink and azure shadows of the Piazza del Campo, but the Torre del Mangia soared upwards, straight as a tulip against the sunset sky. Galeazzo turned to his venerable companion. "Messir," he said . . . .

Such passages fail to convince the attentive reader, who is aware that umbrella pines are but few at Siena and that the company at the moment were traveling west to east. The imagination, as well as the self-assertiveness, of the author must be held in check.

Such then are the instincts, poisons and temptations that render biography impure. An undue desire to commemorate, a too earnest endeavor to teach or preach, a tendency to portray types rather than individuals, the temptation to enhance self-esteem by indulging in irony, the inability to describe selflessly, and the urge to slide into fiction or to indulge in fine writing—all these are the pests and parasites that gnaw the leaves of purity. Yet these are negative precepts, indicating the faults that should be eschewed. Are there any positive principles that can be recommended to the intended biographer?

It is self-evident that he should not select a subject outside the range of his sympathy or the area of his general knowledge. It would thus be a mistake for a man to embark upon a life of Pope if he were ill-attuned to the heroic couplet and disliked small

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stratagems. It would be a mistake to start writing a life of Anselm without some knowledge of Plato's doctrines of ideas, or to embark upon Erasmus when ignorant of the humanities. It would be foolish for an Englishman to venture on a biography of Calvin Coolidge without having spent at least a year at Amherst and absorbed the indelible quality of that academy.

The ideal subject is one of which the author has direct personal experience and with which he can enter into sympathetic relationship. This raises the question whether it is in fact possible for any author—however skilled, courageous or sincere—to write a pure biography of a contemporary. It is clear that it will be of great advantage to him to have been personally acquainted with his hero and to have seen him not only in his moments of public triumph or efficiency, but also in those interludes of lassitude, dyspepsia or elation that reveal the character of a man. Important it is also to be able to visualize a person not in the set postures of official busts or portraits, but in the more illuminating attitudes of ordinary life. It is valuable to be able to recall the manner in which he coughed or grunted, the exact shape of his smile or frown, the sound of his laughter, and, above all, the tone of his voice. We are all conscious that the personality of our acquaintances is conveyed to us not merely by their physical appearance and expression, but also by their accent and intonation. It is illuminating to be told that Bismarck spoke with the piping notes of a schoolboy, that Napoleon when angry relapsed into the Corsican manner of speech, or that Tennyson when reciting his poems used the broad vowels of the Lincolnshire wold. It is valuable also for a biographer to be personally acquainted with the men and women who exercised an influence upon the life of his subject and to be able, by his own judgment, to assess their relative value. "How strange," he will reflect, "that my hero could ever for one moment have been taken in by such a charlatan as I know X to have been!How curious that he was never able to appreciate the shy wisdom, the fundamental integrity, of my dear friend Y!" This wider knowledge provides a system of triangulation, enabling the author to fix the position of his hero with greater accuracy than would ever be possible were he writing about people whom he had never personally known.

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Such are the advantages—and they are immense—which the biographer enjoys when writing the life of a contemporary. The disadvantages are also apparent. He will be inhibited by his disinclination to offend the susceptibilities of survivors. It is not only that he will hesitate to wound the feelings of relations and friends; it is also that the enemies of his hero may still be living and will protest violently against any criticisms that may be made. To some extent he can evade this difficulty by refraining from expressing any personal opinion and relying solely upon the documents in the case. But the necessity of maintaining a certain level of taste, consideration, caution and kindliness will certainly prevent him from revealing the truth in its most naked form.

Does this mean, I repeat, that it is impossible for an author to write a pure biography of a contemporary? I do not think so. He will realize of course that, human nature being what it is, the reader of his book will pay more attention to those passages which reveal defects hitherto concealed than to those which eulogize merits already familiar. The essential truth of any portrait depends upon the proper statement of relative values. A biographer should be aware that the "startling revelation" is certain to startle, and will thus assume in the reader's mind and memory an importance out of proportion to the portrait as a whole. His revelations therefore should not be picked out in scarlet or orange but introduced in neutral tints. His aim should be not to conceal defects or lamentable episodes, but to refer to them in such a manner as will indicate to the attentive reader that these shadows existed, without disconcerting the inattentive reader or wounding the legitimate feelings of surviving relations and friends. It is a question of tact and skill.

It has always interested me, when reading the biography of a person with whom I had been personally acquainted, to observe how the author deals with his faults. A device frequently adopted is to reveal the fault by denying its opposite. An extreme example of this method can be found in Sir Sidney Lee's biography of King Edward VII. Sir Sidney was an honest biographer, who desired to paint his portrait, warts and all. I had often heard that King Edward was a voracious eater and that he was apt to pounce

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and gobble at the dishes placed before him. I wondered whether Sir Sidney would mention this genial characteristic and was impressed by the delicacy of his device. "He had," wrote Sir Sidney, "a splendid appetite at all times, and never toyed with his food." It is by such ingenuity that the biographer is able to omit no detail and yet to cause no offense.

I should cite as an excellent example of the way in which an intelligent biographer can indicate defects without wounding feelings Mr. Rupert Hart Davis' recent biography of Sir Hugh Walpole. The attentive reader is made aware of all the lights and shadows in the character portrayed, whereas the inattentive reader is not for one moment startled or shocked. Every weakness of Walpole's character is abundantly illustrated, yet the resultant impression is that of a gifted and charming man. I recommend this work to all those who question whether it is possible to write a pure biography of a contemporary figure. The artist has produced an authentic portrait owing to his sense of values; without such a sense, any biography is bound to be unconvincing.

It is here that a natural gift of selection is so valuable. The aim is to convey the personality of some interesting individual to people or generations who never knew him when alive. It is not possible for a biographer, even if he take twenty years and volumes, to present the whole man to posterity. He can hope only, by intelligent and honest selection, to convey the impression of the aggregate of his hero's merits and defects. If he allows himself to deck his portrait with striking little snippets and tags, the unity of impression will be destroyed. His curiosity therefore must be moderated by selection and taste; he must preserve throughout a uniform tone; and he must try—he must try very hard—to arrange his facts in the right order.

"The value of every story," remarked Dr. Johnson, "depends on its being true. A story is a picture, either of an individual, or of life in general. If it be false, it is a picture of nothing." This precept should, I feel, be inscribed in lapidary letters on the flyleaf of every biographer's notebook. A pure biography should furnish its readers with information, encouragement and comfort. It should provide, if I may again quote Dr. Johnson, "the parallel circumstances and

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kindred images to which we readily conform our minds." It should remind the reader that great men and women also have passed through phases of doubt, discouragement and self-abasement; that —perhaps on the very eve of their noblest achievements—they have been assailed with diffidence, or have resigned themselves to the fact that their vitality is ebbing, their zest has gone, their memory has become unreliable, and their will power decayed. Without seeking for one moment to preach a lesson, a good biography encourages people to believe that man's mind is in truth unconquerable and that character can triumph over the most hostile circumstances, provided only that it remains true to itself. Amusing books can be written about ridiculous people; fiction and romance can be twined as honeysuckle around the silliest head; but I am convinced that a pure biography, if its effect is to be more than momentary, can only be written about a person whom the writer and the reader can fundamentally respect.

Does this imply a return to hagiography? No, it implies only that the intending biographer should be as cautious in his choice of subject as in the method he pursues.

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Sinclair Lewis: *A Portrait*

FREDERICK F. MANFRED

ANGELA IS TWENTY-TWO was in town (Minneapolis) with Red Lewis starring in his own play. I bought a ticket to see it, and afterwards, when a friend of mine who was a *Time* reporter asked me to go along with him to interview Sinclair, I also got a brief close-up of him for the first time—the brief close-up being the length of time it took Red to poke his lean hawk's head around the corner of the door to say no, he was too busy seeing friends and relatives down from his home town, Sauk Center. The *Time* man was a considerate fellow, and I was timid, so we backed away and had ourselves a beer and a ham-on-rye instead at the old Stockholm Café.

My next contact with him came when he was conducting a writing class at the University of Minnesota in the fall quarter of 1942. At the time I didn't believe anyone could teach another to write (and I still don't, even though I've conducted writing classes of my own—you can inspire someone to get started, but only he really knows what he can and should say), but I did think that a successful writer could give a few pointers on how to place a completed manuscript. I wanted Red to read and to advise me on one of my three as yet unpublished novels, and I asked the head of the English department, the poet and critic Joseph Warren Beach, to intercede for me. The answer I got came in the form of a letter, as follows:

Minneapolis
November 22, 1942

Dear Mr. Feikema:

I'm really sorry, but between the MSS I already have to read for my students, and the desperate final work on my

✪ FREDERICK F. MANFRED, novelist and friend of Sinclair Lewis, formerly wrote under the pen name of Feike Feikema. His next novel, *Lord Grizzly*, will be published in the fall of 1954.

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new novel, which must be finished by Christmas, it would be quite impossible for me to read your novel.

Sincerely yours,
Sinclair Lewis

Then in the summer of 1944, our lives touched again. This time it came in the form of a protest from him. It seems that he had swooped in on the Regional Writing Committee of the University of Minnesota to have a look at the list of names of those given writing fellowships the previous year. I had been given one, and when he came across the title of my first novel, *The Golden Bowl*, to be published that fall, he entered a lengthy and emphatic protest with the secretary, Helen Clapesattle. He said I just simply could not and should not use a title that Henry James had already used for one of his novels. This protest came to me through my publisher, Paul Hillestad at the Itasca Press in St. Paul, Minnesota. Paul and I considered it at some length, but we finally decided to keep it, despite the objection that seemed, to me at least, to come from Mount Olympus, since the forms for the book were already set and since this was already a shortened form of my first title, *The Golden Bowl Be Broken*. Paul argued that the book trade folk would call it *The Golden Bowl* anyway, and I was thinking that we should use the ironic comment of the dusted-out farmers themselves for the title.

Then in January, 1946, I got to spend a long weekend, really almost a week, with Lewis in his own home up at Duluth, in the company of my wife Maryanna and Ann Chidester, another Minnesota writer. Enough time had passed by then for him to get around to reading my first novel, *Golden Bowl*. From what he said later, I learned that he had liked *Bowl* very much, and that he had quietly sent it on to the American Academy of Arts and Letters fiction committee, which awarded me, along with Jean Stafford, one of the 1945 grants-in-aid for a thousand dollars.

My wife and I had just bought a place out in the country. What with the furnace still not in and only an old oil stove to heat one room, my wife and I decided that she and the baby should stay in

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town with Gramma while I stayed out alone to finish the final pages of my third novel, *This Is the Year.*

It was the evening of the fourteenth, and I was in the midst of making a lonesome bachelor's meal of fried potatoes, steak, onions, along with tea, when the phone rang. In the mixup and uproar of settling into the house it happened that the electric stove had been set near the old-style country wall phone, and so while I answered it I kept right on stirring the potatoes and watching the steak.

It was the operator at the Curtis Hotel. Making sure she had her man, she put me through to a room, and the next voice I heard was a man's, clear, quick, nervous, high-pitched.

"Mr. Feikema?" The man had the accent right, on the first syllable.

"Yes?"

"This is Sinclair Lewis speaking."

"Oh," I said—flatly, because I didn't think it possible.

"Mr. Feikema, I'm simply delighted to hear your voice. I've read your *Golden Bowl*, and I'd like to meet you. Are you coming into Minneapolis one of these days by any chance?"

"Why, yes, it just happens I am coming in tomorrow."

"Wonderful. Wonderful. Could you drop in and see me? I'll be free all afternoon."

"Yes I could."

"Good. How about coming up to my rooms in the Curtis at, say, around four?"

"Sounds good to me."

"Wonderful." By the way his voice rose and fell I could tell that he was jumping around excitedly on the other end of the wire. "This is wonderful. A great pleasure. I've been looking forward to this. Really. I'm just simply delighted to hear your voice at last and that we'll meet."

"And I'm delighted." My voice was still flat, mostly because I still didn't think it possible that Sinclair Lewis was talking to me and was asking to see me. In fact, I was busy wondering if it couldn't possibly be one of my friends pulling my leg again.

We hung up. When I looked down, I found that my potatoes and steak and onions were burning.

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I went in the next day and just for the heck of it took the precaution of buying his latest book, *Cass Timberlane*, and also one of my own, *Boy Almighty*. When I told the clerk, in boyish confidence, that I was buying *Cass* in the hope that I might get Red Lewis to autograph it, she shook her head and said he rarely did that for anyone any more. But I took the two books with me anyway.

I knocked on his door at precisely four. It was cold, and I remember that I was all bundled up in a big greatcoat and a high fur hat. The door opened and a pair of luminous gray-green eyes topped by thinning white hair looked up at me, looked up even though the head was tilted forward and down. Pale, almost imperceptible brows had climbed halfway up a high blond forehead.

"Mr. Lewis? I'm Feikema."

He exploded into action and seized my hand with both of his, excitedly, and said, "This is a pleasure. A real pleasure. Come in, come in. Here. Take off your things and put 'em there and sit down." He almost pranced around me. I was not used to such excitement, especially not from a celebrity, and sort of stiffly, numb, I slowly peeled off my heavy coat and fur hat.

Red said, "And look who's here. You know Ann Chidester from Stillwater?"

I said, "Oh yes. We're old friends. Hi, Ann."

"Hi, Fred." She was smiling, and had gotten to her feet, and came over to shake hands. She was a big, fine-looking girl with an open, honest face and merry, watchful eyes.

Red watched us, excited. "My God, isn't he a big lummox, Ann? I thought I was tall, but look at him. My God, he's bigger'n Paul Bunyan himself." Red walked around us like a coach who couldn't believe his eyes. "Well, well. Well, have a seat. Sit down. Now."

We all sat. Red and Ann lit cigarettes, and Ann began to fill in the gap with some remarks. I looked over at him, the social part of me numb but the back part of my brain racing and already beginning to record what I was seeing. I noted, among other things, that he was as lean and as tough-looking as a long string of jerked beef and that he had long talon-ended pale hands and a high doming forehead and quick though cracked lips and swift eyes that seemed to notice everything. He was wearing a tweed suit of what I would

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call an orange shade that seemed to be a part of his whitening red hair and pale blond skin.

My eyes finally fastened on his face. And the face I saw was a face to haunt one in dreams. It was a face that looked as if it were being slowly ravaged by a fire, by an emotional fire, by a fire that was already fading a little and that was leaving a slowly contracting lump of gray-red cinder.

We talked a few minutes, Ann and I, with Red listening, and watching my eyes and lips, and looking up and down my body, and observing my big wet feet (I still hadn't been able to buy galoshes or rubbers my size) and my big red hands, and then he said suddenly, "What've you got in that package?"

"A couple of books."

"Well? well?" he said, moving on his couch, reaching out a hand, snapping his fingers. "Well, are you going to let me see it?"

I handed the package to him, and his nervous, tic-ridden fingers pulled off the wrapping. He looked. "Good, good," he said, "fine. Here, you fix up your book to me and I'll fix up yours."

I was glad to comply, and I wrote something to the effect that I regarded him as one of those who had shown the way for the younger writing generation coming in, had made it possible for them to relax while they were being honest. He was quite pleased with the sentiment, and a quick tear came and went in his eyes. He made a quick move to hide his feelings, and waved his slinging arms and hands around for us to keep talking. What he wrote for me in his book made the blood suddenly roar through my head. He wrote only three words. But they were words a young brave longs to hear from a chief. And, for my own sanity, they were also words I quickly shook some salt on.

We sat maybe some five minutes, talking about this, that and the other, nothing serious that I remember now anyway, when all of a sudden he got to his feet—I had gotten up to get a handkerchief from my overcoat—and said, speaking over his shoulder at Ann, "Isn't he a whopper? Isn't he, isn't he? Look," he said, "look, we've got to see more of each other. How about you coming up for a couple of days to my home in Duluth? On a visit? Then we can talk and talk. Visit. How about it? And you too, Ann. Both of you."

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He went into another sort of prancing run around us, waving his lean, almost luminescent hands, plans tumbling out of his cracked lips in profusion. "Look, how about next week? Ann, you've got a good car, so you pick him up. Ah-h, say, come up on Thursday. And stay as long as you like. A week. Ten days. A whole weekend at least. That'll be fine. Okay, Fred?"

"Sure, that's fine. If it won't be too much of a bother."

"Bother? bother? Not at all. You must come."

I said, "Uh, Mr. Lewis, would you mind if I took my wife along?"

"Wife? wife?" A shadow passed over his cinder-tight face. "Wife?"

I laughed. "I'm still at that stage, Mr. Lewis, where I like to share things with my wife. Or maybe I'm just old-fashioned."

"Where do you get that 'mister' stuff, huh? You hate me or somethin', huh? I'm Red to my friends."

"Red, then. Could Maryanna come with me?"

"Oh-h . . . all right. If you must. But Ann will drive you up. Okay, Ann?"

Ann said, "That's fine with me, Red."

"Good, good. That's all set then. Fine."

About then his driver came in for some instructions. Red introduced him as Ace. The driver was a slow-smiling, calm-faced fellow with quiet eyes that sized things up realistically. Red said, "By the way, Ace, the kids here, Ann and Fred, are coming up to spend a week with me. Isn't that wonderful? We'll just have a wonderful time. I need a little life and excitement around me before I start the new book and they'll be just right."

"I see," Ace said, hardly changing expression. "Sounds fine."

"It is fine," Red said, dancing around Ace. "And we'll have a swell time."

After Red had dismissed Ace, he gave us a mischievous look. "Ace's not only the best driver in the state of Minnesota but the most informed. What he don't know about Duluth isn't worth recording. He used to operate a taxi stand there and he ran into all of the stuck-ups at all hours of the night and in all sorts of conditions."

We laughed.

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We talked some more, and then finally, noticing that he seemed on edge about something, and thinking perhaps I had used up my first welcome, I made a move to go. Ann got up too. He seemed relieved.

He repeated his invitation in the doorway as we shook hands. "Well, I'll see the two of you next week. Thursday, sometime in the afternoon."

"Fine, Red." To make sure he understood I had his permission to take my wife with me, I said, "It's all right then if Maryanna comes with me?"

"Who?"

"My wife."

"Oh. Her. Well . . . okay. If she must, take her along."

Driving up in the bitter cold, with a good foot of snow lying on the ground, it seemed strange to me that we should be going to visit a quick-tempered, even hot-tempered man in that cold northland pine country, where the land was always either green or white or both. Even his nickname Red seemed out of place.

We got there in the afternoon, and he held open the door of his banker-class Tudor house and welcomed us in friendly fashion. His housekeeper showed us our rooms. We freshened ourselves and came down, and were invited to have tea with him in the dining room. He took the head of the table, placed Ann on his left, Maryanna on his right, and me across from him—a chair, I remember thinking, that a wife of his should have sat in. The dining room was really a sort of splendid dining hall, with walnut paneling and colored windows and thick carpeting and hand-carved sideboards encircling a red-leather-topped table and red-leather armchairs. The chairs caught my eye in particular because they were the first I had encountered in which I could lounge a little while I ate.

As the tea was being poured by the housekeeper—she had taken a seat to my right for a few moments—Red took a notebook out of his pocket and waited a moment for the talk to die down, then said, "Look, I'd like to get your reaction to these titles." He put down a nervous finger, traced the titles. "Kingson, Kingsblood, Kingsman. Which do you like best for a book that's about a man who

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believes in a family legend that somewhere way back one of the ancestors descended from royalty? When all along he's really got some Negro blood in him?"

All three of us chose Kingsblood. The unanimity surprised him. He looked around at all of us, nodded, said, "Good. I've got the title for my new book then. And now I can relax for the rest of your stay here. Next week I can begin work."

I had heard before about Red's way of letting others choose his titles for him, and sitting there I had the distinct feeling that he had taken our pulse, that with his finger on the pulse he was again his father, the country bedside doctor, the father he admired to idolatry. And I also had the feeling that Red was asking us to share in the responsibility—some would say guilt—for the kind of books he wrote.

Then he turned over a page in the notebook and looked at me. "Read your *Boy Almighty*. I've been coughing"—he demonstrated—"been coughing ever since. Felt like I really had TB myself. Wonderful. Have only a few adverse comments to offer." He peered down at the notebook. "You've got a little too much bull in it." There was a laugh around the table. He laughed too. "But I mean it. Here." He tore out the sheet and handed it across to me, I looked at it:

Feikema—
Fawkes' notes
Excessive virility—
manroots
bull seeding heifer
Wants fellow dreamer

P.S. Ace and I got TB.

"Could I keep this?" I asked.

"Of course, course. I want you to keep it. And to take those things and consider 'em. I'm not giving orders, you understand. I just want you to look at it."

Tea finished, Red said he had a few errands to do up in his room. The womenfolk thought they should change for dinner, and I

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thought that with my TB background I could use a cat nap. Before I went up to our room, Red's housekeeper, buxom, quite self-contained and obviously proud of her position, wanted to show me the place. In the living room she pointed out the "expensive" phonograph radio, the Childe Hassam oils, the massive and "expensive" lamps, the thick rugs, the drapery, the "snappy" chairs; in the solarium she pointed out some choice knickknacks while completely overlooking the walls that were tight with "expensive" sets of books; in the hall she again pointed out some "expensive" lamps while overlooking a couple of cases full of good books; and then, coming to the room where Maryanna and I were to stay, she pointed out some more "expensive" lamps. The lamps seemed to be on her mind, for some reason or other, and to kid her a little, I said, "I ought to snitch one and then I could live easy for a couple of years."

She gave me a hooded look. "Better not play any gags," she said. "They really do cost a lot of money. That one by your bed there cost over two hundred dollars."

I gave her a stare. My wife and I had been managing to get along with a little number over our bed that cost us $1.98 at Sears, Roebuck.

She nodded. "It's true."

"Lady, I'll take care of that lamp as if it were my own child. Don't worry."

The truth is, after that lamp harangue, I was careful not to turn on any lamps except the one in the bathroom. That one, I decided, had been put in by the contractor's electrician and was probably designed for service.

While the women finished dressing, I sat in a chair in front of our second-story window and looked out far across to Lake Superior. Its surface was almost covered with ice, with the center still blue and steaming mightily. I looked down and saw the city of Duluth staggered roof by roof down the high bluff to the water front. It was a mighty sight and I thought to myself, well, maybe Red has found his home at last—because this is a sight that could inspire even a king to poetry.

At the dinner that night he got going on the race question. He had spent some time in the South and had also hired himself a

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male colored cook, a cook who had excellent reading tastes. Red not only seemed to have explored the scenes of racial intolerance, but had also done a lot of reading on the subject. He probed us to see how we reacted to it all, but the only reaction he got from us was agreement. It was obvious, as we went along, that Red's interest was more than just casual, that in fact, as his list of titles suggested, he was about to explore the race question—which he did, of course, in his next novel, *Kingsblood Royal*. Red's way of arguing was to exaggerate a point and then sit back. If anybody was so foolish as to reply exaggeratedly, Red was out and pouncing. And though some new sores along his lips seemed to hurt him when he talked too vigorously, he didn't let his prey get away.

Dishes came and went, and we talked and talked, and finally around nine-thirty we retired to the living room. We sat before a white marble fireplace. Ann and Red hooked up in a furious chess game while the phonograph played Delius. Somehow, it seemed to me at the time, "Seadrift" seemed to fit the mood of the dappled yellow-green Hassams on the wall. The music was soothing to me, though to Red, when he got behind in his chess game, it seemed a stimulant. Ann was a solid player, steady, while Red was inclined to be too daring in the beginning, which put him behind, and then he had to turn on the heat. He was good when pressed. After winning the game, Red indicated he was tired and turned down the housekeeper's offer to serve a nightcap. We all went to bed—the male Feikema careful not to turn on any of the high-priced lamps.

The next few days went along at about the same tempo: meals at regular hours but with a lot of time spent talking afterwards over coffee around the red-topped table while lolling in the huge armchairs. We talked of life and letters. Ann was a great storyteller, and she had a way of building up a climax in even the most ordinary of events that made Red listen with his mouth partially open.

Someone happened to mention Mencken, and Red's face clouded. "Yes, Hank was a great guy. Real force. Did a lot of good. And I liked the old Hank. That is, the Hank when he was younger. He was an honest fighter. But lately, he's taken to issuing pronunciamentoes from on high. And that I don't like. Taking himself entirely too seriously."

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Another mentioned Dreiser and what a tower of a man he was. Again Red was disturbed about something and waving his spoon over his cup, he said, "True, true. Dreiser's great, all right. But one thing many people don't know about. He wasn't always for the underdog. Not at all. When he was an editor he was one of the toughest devils to talk to any young writer had to face. Ted was all apple pie to the old successful hack, but when any young punk came in, Dreiser was all teeth. He was like a bulldog defending his master's, his boss's property. He scared the talent out of many a timid young fellow."

Ann said, "He didn't seem to have scared you."

"Of course not. I fought back. I wasn't afraid of him. The big boob."

Someone mentioned Jim Farrell, saying that he was quite an admirer of Dreiser even though their political religions were in violent opposition at the end. This caused Red to smile in memory and he said, "You know, I have to admire Jim. I gave his latest book a panning in *Esquire*. I said he was writing sloppily, besides thinking sloppily. And what do you know. Sometime later Jim gets a chance to take a crack at me in print and he says, 'Who? Red Lewis? That old hack?' " Red laughed. "He sure whacked me one there."

"Are you going to whack him back?"

"What? Never. We each take a crack and then we quit. Otherwise we're admitting we've been hit bad."

Red added, "Now you kids, when you get bad reviews, let most of 'em go. But somewhere along the line, when you get a chance, and the chance is a good one and you're properly enraged, why then let fly." Red chuckled and daintily touched his sore lips with a voluminous white handkerchief. "Never will forget the way I fixed one fellow. He was an English reviewer. In England. And by great luck we met at a party. He had taken me all apart in his reviews, you know, had just given me a whale of a beating, from one end to the other. I was awful, he said. No art at all. Sheer reporting. Rampant journalism. Wrote enormous fat notebooks. Said I should brood more over my things. Et cetera. Said what I had to say was pure tripe. That the paper it was printed on had been wasted, and

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so on. I spotted him at this party, then, and so I said to my friend sitting next to me, 'Watch this. I'm going to give this guy the Minnesota treatment.' I introduced myself. When he heard my name, he blinked and took a step back, raising his hands as if he expected me to punch him. Then I turned on the charm. I thanked him profusely for all the wonderful attention he had given me. Told him nobody, not even the American critics, had shown such insight into my work. No one had noticed all the subtle nuances that he had seen. Oh, I just laid it on. Finally my friend jerks my elbow and whispers, 'For godsakes, Red, cut it out. This is killin' me.' "

"What happened?"

Red laughed. "Why, after that I never got better reviews in my life. He became the greatest expert on Red Lewis in Europe."

We talked about Upper Midlands writers, in particular Minnesota writers: Le Sueur, Gray, Seeley, Krause, Beach, Warren, Stegner, Derleth. About Robert Penn Warren, who was teaching at the University of Minnesota, he fell silent. It happened that I had met Red Warren and that I had read his poems and novels. I said that I thought highly of him both as man and as artist. Red Lewis listened with interest. At the time it was difficult to tell if he had read Warren or was keeping his opinion to himself. He did mutter that a writer had to be careful not to get the "literary clique religion," which was just as bad as the Jesus or the Mohammedan or the Lenin religion. That night, when we went to bed, I happened to notice on his bedtable, beside Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* that he was reading, one of Warren's books. Later, Red Lewis was one of the first to hail Red Warren's new book, *All the King's Men.*

Sitting before the great picture window one evening, watching twilight deepen the steaming grayish-blue of Lake Superior to dark blue, Red fell into a self-belittling mood. It was as if the end of another day had reminded him that eventually it all had to end at last in the endless blue-dark of eternity. "That's the way it goes. For a little while you have it. The old bite, the old sting. And you give it to 'em while you have it. And everybody cheers and everybody says, 'He's really on today, isn't he? He's really hot this time! Wow!' But it isn't long before it's all gone. The vim, the vigor, the

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celestial spark. All gone." Red continued to look out over the darkening lake in the falling night. "You may kid yourself for a little while that you've still got it, of course. You may even go around with young kids for a time in the hope of picking up a little of their natural fire. You may even give instructions on how the blurbs for your books should be written—and then when they come out, believe the blurbs yourself. But it isn't long before you're shown up." The lake began to resemble an endless waste of honed basalt. "And if it really should happen that your fangs hang on, society will make damn sure to separate you from them. Oh not by the obvious way of pulling them out by means of the critical pliers, or by means of the censor's scissors. No, no. But by blandishments. By fussy overattention. By studied cajolery." The night came down tight then and at last the lake and the sky were gone, and Red turned in his chair to look at us. "And they do it so subtly and smoothly that the old rattler himself usually doesn't know when he's been defanged. So that every so often, when people get a little too free or gay with the way they handle the old boy, just to show 'em that he's still got it, that he's still dangerous, that he still possesses his old sting, the old boy coils up, and opens his serpent's mouth and hisses, and drums his rattles. And they, remembering how he used to knock 'em dead, they all back away a little again. And murmur and whisper half-fearfully and half-admiringly about how the old boy still can do it. He may even strike a couple of times, hitting live flesh here and there. So that then everybody cheers and shouts, 'By God, he actually really did it again!' " Red let a hand fall from his lap. "But after a while, when none of the stung die, it becomes apparent it was a hollow show. That he didn't have it at all anymore."

We also talked about the great middle class. On this he was quite voluble, saying among other things that the middle class had always been and would always be, and how happy he had been to see that that was what he should write about, since he knew it so well all the way back to his roots—they were his meat, and they were also his friends. He said, "You know, people just don't understand me. Here I think I've presented a warm picture of the man Cass Timberlane, and everybody thinks I hate him. Well, if I hate him

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I hate myself. Which I don't. At least not that I'm aware of."

And there was one occasion when he did re-enact the role of a Babbitt. We had not been there more than a day when he told us that he had decided to leave Duluth, that he had already sold the house for May delivery, and that he was now engaged in selling some of the extra furniture which he didn't want to cart across the country to Massachusetts. Sure enough, when a furniture dealer showed up to have a look at the things, along with some of the many rare lamps, Red undertook to do the selling himself. He haggled and rubbed his hands and jumped up and down and stamped his feet and gasped in mock amazement at low offers and swept the dealer with shrewd side looks. And when they had done, he came back into the solarium, rubbing his hands still, smiling like the cat that had caught the mouse, exclaiming, "By God, I think I did him more than he did me." He relished it.

The second night there, he organized a small party. Two of the guests, a married couple, were exclusive folk, he said. "People who because of their race are not welcome in the homes of the Duluth mighty, the elegant supersnoots. When I first came to Duluth, I used to hang around a little with Margaret Culkin Banning and the Oliver Mining Company crowd, but when they wouldn't invite my friends, and especially these two friends, why I cut 'em. Besides, after the first highball, Margaret always thinks she has to tell me what's wrong with my novels. When I know better what's wrong with 'em than she does. Why, one night she tried to tell Johnny Gunther what he really should have done with his *Insides*. Nah, she's too bossy." The other two people to come, Red said, were a judge and his good wife. "A judge everybody thinks I modeled Cass Timberlane after. Utter nonsense. Not so at all. As you will see when you meet him."

The party was a success at first. We were still lingering over coffee in the luxurious dining room when they came, and Red suggested that they all come right in and join us for another cup.

It wasn't long before one of the women mentioned the name of his former wife, Dorothy Thompson, the newspaper columnist. Red's eyes lighted up. Someone said he had heard her give a talk in favor of re-electing Roosevelt, a fighting talk as it turned out,

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and when the account of it was finished, Red said, hitting the table, "Atta girl, Dotty. Give it to 'em!"

We all smiled. He really still liked her. Red said, "Yes, Dorothy was a great gal. A wonderful gal. If only she hadn't been so damn bossy." He sighed deeply. "But . . . she being what she was, she just had to be bossy. Too bossy. That poor fellow she's married to now, I sure pity him. I know exactly what he's going through."

Red then gave a mimic's account of what living with Dorothy was like. He pictured and acted out an entire day's life with her. For a few minutes Red was two other people. It was a brilliant, dazzling show.

Finished, Red peered around at all of us to see what the effect had been.

There were laughter and big round eyes from the audience. Seeing that Ann was laughing the loudest, Red suddenly turned on her. "And you. Look at you. Built just like her. Husky. Vigorous. Strapping and powerful. Clear-eyed Brunhilde all over again. Got a lot of strong opinions. And you write too. And you do what you want. Oh-h, I sure pity the guy you marry. You'll treat that poor bugger just like Dorothy treats that poor man." He lashed out a long yellow finger at Ann. "Why don't you leave us poor little fellows alone? We're only trying to get along the best we can. In our little way." He looked over at me to include me in the talk. "We're only trying to get along like honest men. Fred and me. We're harmless. We don't mean any harm. But here you big American women come along and beat us up and lock us up and baby-feed us from dawn to sunset. When you give us your opinion you raise your voice and beat the table like any fool of a man. My goodness, woman, let us have some freedom. So we get a chance to grow up. First thing you know, the little will power we have left will be completely atrophied in us. Please."

We laughed harder than ever, Ann still hardest. She was choking with it. Red was in fine form and knew it.

"Yeah, you American women. I know a certain Midland college president. Famous fellow. Great administrator—probably gets more brilliant ideas per day than his entire faculty combined. But the poor bugger's doomed. He's married to an American woman. And

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you know what she does? Besides wishing she were back in the good old days when she was a foetus? He isn't awake one minute but what she hasn't pricked his balloon. You know how a man is in the morning. After he's washed the sleep out of his eyes, and is sipping at his coffee, why, he slowly starts getting a few ideas on how he's to face the day. Ideas at that time are very delicate and uncertain. They need to be encouraged. They need warmth and love. Gentle love. So here he is, the poor sucker, warming his hands around his cup of coffee, savoring it, feeling the warmth of it rising in his nostrils, and slowly but surely becoming aware of a few timid little morning notions in his head, and vaguely hoping that these little timid creatures may grow up . . . when all of a sudden his hag of a wife has to mention some horrible personal defect of his, some trivial little thing that sticks him in the soft spot, that only she could know because she dresses and undresses on the opposite side of the bed from him. And wheeet! Gone are the little timid embryo ideas for that day. How that man has refrained from poisoning her is beyond me. Beyond me. No, most modern American women are ruined. Ruined."

There was some more laughter, mostly from the males.

"Yeah, and I'm the only male here who can talk up. The rest of you bums are married and 're scared of what your wife will do to you when you go to bed tonight."

More laughter, this time uneasily from the men.

One woman in the crowd couldn't let the hot ember lie, and she challenged him. "Oh now, Mr. Lewis, you know that's exaggerated."

He leaped up, a yellow fire, finger darting like a licking flame. "What d'you mean, 'exaggerated'? Of course it's not exaggerated. American women are like that. Killers of talent. Unless it's talent which helps them obtain power. But the minute it's talent that they can't control or understand, why, stab stab stab, they've got to prick that balloon. The . . . the . . . of course they're like that."

"Oh come now."

Red jumped about a foot. And suddenly he kicked back his chair and whirled and lunged out of the room and tramped upstairs to his den.

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An appalling silence fell over us. Our host had left us.

Finally Ann said, trying to pull the gap together again, "It's all my fault. I shouldn't've laughed so hard when he was teasing me."

"No no," the woman who had challenged Red said. "No no, it's my fault." She turned very red. She put a hand to her face and hid her eyes. "What do we do now?"

For the moment no one had an idea. We all toyed with our spoons, clinking the coffee cups a little.

The woman said, "God, I feel awful."

It just happened that Red's calm-faced driver, Ace, had joined us some ten minutes before (Red had the custom of getting his cook, driver, and housekeeper into all sorts of discussions with his guests —it was probably one of his ways of getting interesting reactions), and he said simply, "Just let him alone. Give him time to cool off. He'll be back. Keep talking down here as if nothing happened. I've been around him long enough and I know that'll do it. He's quick-tempered but he's also a quick forgiver."

If Red was a quick forgiver, I thought to myself, why did he still think the way he did about American women? It was either a case of an irascible temper or a case of extreme provocation. Or both.

"God, I feel awful," the woman said. She made moves to get up and go home. Her husband held her down.

Ann asked me, "What do we do now? These people can go home but we're staying at his house."

"I dunno. Follow Ace's advice I guess." I tried to smile. "Furthermore, for myself, I don't think I've done anything to feel guilty about. My God, we're allowed private opinions on these things, aren't we? That you feel you shouldn't laugh so loud is all wrong. You're letting him move in on you."

"God, I feel awful," the woman said.

Sure enough, after we had managed to knit some sort of conversation together again, all the while very aware of his pacing directly above us, we heard him coming down the stairs and then shuffling through the hall. He came in diffidently, almost like a little boy, a little boy who was having a hard time admitting he had been in the wrong. He stood at the head of the table and looked at all of us, each of us, and then apologized very graciously, almost

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sweetly, and as he drew up his chair and sat down, he turned to the red-faced woman. "Really, my dear, you know I'm touchy on that subject. Why did you have to stir me up? You know that you shouldn't've stirred that old knife that's still sticking in me."

Slowly the talk picked up again, and the embarrassed woman got back her original coloring, and Red let loose more and more, and by the time the party broke up, it was as if the blowup had never been. Everyone was gaily bidding everyone else good night.

The next day Ann happened to find, in one of the guest rooms, a bookcase full of first editions, foreign editions, special editions of all Red's work. Red's reaction was one of shyness. He refused to talk about the books, and after a moment or two, led us away.

Apparently, however, the incident served to warm him up to something, and it wasn't long before he had me in his workroom showing me how he did his writing. (Ann apparently had been given the same kindness at an earlier date.) He showed me how he laid out his plots, even to building a miniature city with the main house or setting especially set up in detail. He let me page through his notebooks, telling me about his manner of collecting and note-taking. He let me see his notebook containing the master list of the names of all characters he had ever used. He showed me a sample of his first draft, second draft with corrections, and his third draft. Then, he said, he always tried to get someone to read the whole book back to him. And, at the very last, he copied the final draft himself. "Because I always find something which no stenographer on earth would find."

As he talked he was very careful to stress that these were his methods, worked out painfully over a long period of time, and that I was not to think that I should follow them even remotely. "Work out your own system that fits you, and t'hell with everybody else's system. You're the only one that knows what's right for you. That is, if you've got the brains."

This led later on into his questioning about my publisher, the Itasca Press. We were having dinner at the time.

"How come you got published by a Midland outfit in St. Paul there?"

"Well . . . because the editor there, Paul Hillestad, was willing

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to work with me, while the Eastern dodos would either say nothing or tell me vaguely to rewrite."

"Maybe they were right."

"Never. They complained about my dialogue. Said no one talked that way. Well, it just happens, Red, that that's the one thing I've really got. An ear for speech and sound. I defy anybody to beat it."

Red's eyes opened at this and he smiled a little.

"They tried to tell me I should see how Steinbeck did his Okies. That really made me roar, because it was my considered opinion that Steinbeck did not quite get those Okies. What he had was partially affected. And I don't mean artistically, because that might be all right. He listened to the Okies in California, all right, but he got so lousy sentimental he read sounds into their mouths they could never have uttered." I snorted. "Then these same dodos suggested I go see how Hemingway did it. I said I wasn't sure Hemingway had caught it either. To me he has the sound of a man who has spent too much time listening to a bunch of barroom bums just sober enough to mutter monosyllables. Or maybe too much time listening to himself say truly yes and truly no."

Red laughed.

"At any rate, Paul Hillestad let my real stuff alone. And Paul took the time to read over every line with me and made me fight to keep it. I learned to write with that fellow. And I now defy anyone to take one line out of any one of my books. That anyone had better have an armful of reasons if he tries it, because I've always got that many for keeping it in—besides feeling that it should stay in."

Red nodded. "Well, that's all very well and all. But now it's time for you to go to an Eastern house and get distribution."

"Maybe the Itasca Press can get that for me too."

"Nah. Got to have a big house in the East. They're the only ones who can do that for you. You've got to have distribution, audience reaction. Got to know that what you are saying is hitting. Otherwise you're writing in a wilderness, in a vacuum. To nobody. Got to have that finger right on that pulse or else you're missing it."

"But, Red, I don't like leaving Paul just like that. We're friends. I couldn't just pull out and leave just because I want to go out and make a lot of money."

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"Well, if you're friends and 're afraid you'll get softhearted, write him a letter and point-blank tell him to send it back to you by mail."

"Oh, but you can't do that to a friend, man!"

Red leaped up, shoving back his chair. " 'Friend'? You a friend with a publisher? Are you mad? Never be close friends with a publisher. They get the notion they're married to you then. Can boss you around. Nah. Publishers are peddlers. Book peddlers. You write 'em, and they peddle 'em. Publishers are supposed to be commercial. They don't write books. Couldn't. Or else they would."

"I dunno, Red. Paul is an awful good friend of mine."

He stared at me, eyes reddening a little. Then he shot a look at Maryanna sitting to his right, and asked, "Fred and this Hillestad guy, they aren't married, are they?"

Maryanna laughed. "No. But they do like each other."

"Terrible mistake. Always keep your publisher at a distance. Especially the editor." Red sat down again, went into a lengthy history of his own relations with Harcourt, Brace, with Doubleday, and finally Random House. He had kind words only for the latter. I couldn't help remembering that the last named was his current publisher.

Red sat down again. "Look, I'm not going to have you remain buried out here with a Midland outfit. I'll fix you up a letter to my agent and he'll get you into a new house—a big one in the East."

"I'll first have to talk to Paul. A man just doesn't walk out without some explanation. Besides, I'm not sure I want to leave. That's to be my decision."

Red jumped up again. This time I thought I was going to get the red-faced woman's treatment. "No no no, you have to go East! You've got to get your stuff out. New York is the publishing center. Not the Twin Cities. All the Twin Cities is known for is flour milling. It's not the book center. You're going at this all wrong. You big bullheaded Dutchman."

"I'm a stiff-necked Frisian."

"What's the difference? Frisian, Dutchman, it's all the same."

"Oh no. Calling a Frisian a Dutchman is like calling an Irishman an Englishman."

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"Anyway, you've got to go East." With that, Red strode out of the room.

Some ten minutes later he came back with a letter. He handed it to me.

"Read it."

It was to his agent, saying that he was instructing me to send him my next book, *This Is the Year,* almost finished. The letter was emphatic, almost written like a military command.

Red was slowly but surely taking and making me over. He began to act like a possessive father to me, as if I were a sort of balky, stubborn son who needed a little harnessing and stropping to get into line. He even bothered to check up on my manners—telling me, for example, that I shouldn't talk with my hand over my mouth (a habit I had whenever I wasn't sure of myself), that I should wear conservative clothes since I stuck out enough as it was, that I should watch my health like a hawk, what with having a tubercular history. And in a way, I liked the attention. Heretofore I'd had to battle everything out alone. My own relatives weren't too eager about my wanting to write, and there wasn't one of them who was capable of any sort of advice, even bad. The final result was that I did go East. But only after I had told everything to Paul and only after he had assured me that he wanted me to follow whatever course would prove best for me.

We were talking in the library the last day. We were to leave shortly.

Suddenly Red said, looking over at my wife as she stood beside a bookcase, "Maryanna, come here. Come here."

She went near him, almost warily.

He took her hand and kissed it. "Maryanna, at first I didn't know about this business of Fred being married. But having seen you for a couple of days now I know you're just right for him. Just right." He kissed her hand again. "Fine woman, fine woman. And Fred, you be good to her. And listen to her advice. She knows what's best."

This made me smile. I had been careful not to tell Maryanna about Red's frown when I'd asked if she could go along. Also, Maryanna happens to be one of the most sympathetic listeners in

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captivity, and, true to her nature, throughout the visit she had confined herself to a few brief, telling remarks salted in at the right places.

"Remember now," he said.

Then it was time to go. I was first to get ready, and came downstairs where he was waiting. I carried our suitcases. The others were still chatting upstairs, finishing their dressing for the cold and the road. It was below zero outside.

I stood near the door with fur cap in hand, big coat on. Red paced back and forth in front of a long table, where a mail tray and a big lamp had been placed on a runner. He walked with head down, hands folded behind him. His long silk robe rustled.

Abruptly he broke off his pacing. He came up to me and gave me a long under-the-brow look, and then punched me lightly and playfully in the belly. "Look at you. A great big fellow. With your whole life still before you. With the whole wide world still to conquer—when, from that height, it's already at your feet. A lot of world because you stand tall."

I protested a little. "Some have thought my tallness a hindrance."

"Who?"

"Well, I'm not too sure my wife's accepted it. Out on the dance floor, for example. Sitting down, yes."

"Have you accepted it?"

"Yes."

"Does it bother you?"

"Not any more."

"Look. Don't trip over your own strength. Like I did for a while over mine."

"You?"

He pointed to his ravaged face. "Yes, me." A look came over his features then, as if he hated what he was going to say, because it was self-pity and he despised self-pity. "There was a time in my life when I was sure that with this to look at, anybody who said they loved me were liars—said it because they had to."

I swallowed. I didn't know what to say. What was there to say to a remark like that? I didn't know at the time, anyway. But I got used to it and turned it to account.

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He punched me lightly in the belly again, and he mellowed, and he said, "Work. Work. Work. And it'll all bend before you."

Then the women came down and it was time to go. He threw his arms around both Maryanna and Ann, gripped my hand.

I saw him three times after that: once at a party given by a University of Minnesota professor; later in his rooms in the St. Paul Hotel, where he entertained Ann and Maryanna and me along with another young man who wanted to write; and then later in his rooms at the Algonquin in New York City. Except for one short spell, he didn't have much to say, and that exception had to do with a parody of the old-time Bible-pounding hell-and-damnation preacher—something he was looking into since he was already working on *The God-Seeker.*

Once some University of Minnesota students, who were planning to put out a literary quarterly, asked me if I wouldn't write to ask him for a contribution of some sort. In the same letter, knowing he would be interested, I told him of my own plans.

His answer was characteristic:

Thorvale Farm
Williamstown, Mass.
November 3, 1945

Dear Fred:

The Chokecherry Tree and *World's Wanderer* sound grand, and I rejoice in them. The North Star Review sounds terrible—just like every other of the 10,000 Lil Magazines of the past 30 years. It will probably be lots of fun, and a complete waste of time and money, but parental advice never did keep the lusty young man from dumb girl. I might, however, faintly whisper that a novelist's job is to write novels, not try to compete with professional magazine publishers.

Ever,
Red

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My Great-Grandmothers Were Happy

PRISCILLA ROBERTSON

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES AND PLACES in which it was fun to be good, and others in which it was more fun to be bad. American society today teeters on the balance, where we often find traditions and opportunities which help us live lives as full as any in past history, yet at the same time we sometimes find ourselves saying (occasionally in earnest, often only in wistful jokes) that the best way to have a really good time is to break some of the rules. Is this a heritage from our distant past, or only from the 1920's? I have recently had a chance to find out a good deal about my ancestresses for six generations back, and have come to the conclusion that for them it was fun to be good; they lived at a time and place where such a life was possible. It was only as conditions changed, toward the end of the nineteenth century, that women's sphere narrowed down rather suddenly so that there were a good two generations that were either left partially idle or had to fight for the right to use their abilities freely.

If people want to break the rules, the trouble is not necessarily with the people; it may be with the rules. Tom Sawyer is a wonderful example of a boy who had fun being bad. Most of the restrictions which he ran into no longer exist. Today schools and homes are adapted to boys' interests, so the chances of having fun as a good boy are much greater. A hundred years earlier, say in 1740, Tom Sawyer might not have been allowed to get away with his pranks at all, and then he could not have had fun either as a good boy or as a bad boy. I am using the words *good* and *bad* for the moment as the authorities concerned would have looked on the matter. Tom's aunt called him a bad boy, however worthy and normal a modern psychologist would judge him.

✪ PRISCILLA ROBERTSON is the author of *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History*. The material for this article comes from a privately published volume which she wrote for her family, *Lewis Farm: A New England Saga*.

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Very much the same sort of thing is true about women and their place in life, though the idea of goodness in women has so often been narrowed down to one particular form of goodness that the broad problem is harder to see. There have been ages when bad women had, or seemed to have, more fun than good women, and other ages when hardly any women led exhilarating lives. There have been still other times when women acting from the highest moral motives have been punished for being unladylike. In recent times, various processes which cramped women's life came to a peak in my mother's generation—freedom was actually greater both before and after that period. Having just been through a severe struggle, women are now used to the excitement of battle and perhaps a little tired of it. They have forgotten, and may be unwilling to believe, that there have also been periods in history when women have lived full, rich lives while doing exactly what they were supposed to do. In fact, there are signs that another such period is coming now, a period when women can enjoy their status without fighting for it or having to justify it. These thoughts came as a surprise to me after I had a chance to brood over the kind of happiness my great-grandmothers enjoyed—their lives were unified, their responsibilities serious ones, and gaiety was no stranger to them.

The women I am talking about lived in a Massachusetts village during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were in no way distinguished or unusual. In fact, their very ordinariness reveals a basic American pattern of equality and independence—a pattern which indicates that we have in times past offered women more of a place in the world than we realize.

A good life should offer affection, appreciation and a secure social position—and women used to enjoy these things. It should also offer responsibility, a chance for imagination and adventure. Some people say the trouble with women today is that in demanding these latter advantages they have deprived themselves of the former. What I have come to believe about my New England family, however, is that both sexes received both sets of privileges. As a matter of fact, if there was a slight edge, it was on the girls' side, for as wealth and leisure increased, the girls began to get

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good educations at a time when the boys still could not be spared from farm work. But this education was regarded as an investment for the whole family, certainly not as a form of conspicuous waste. The girls often became teachers and were certainly supposed to be better mothers for it.

Beyond this, whatever life offered of hard work, family affection, religious consolation, community responsibility and adventure was open equally to the women and to the men. In their simple sort of life, no one's influence reached beyond the town in which he lived. The men were farmers first and may have been blacksmiths or saddlers on the side. The first sign of division or discrimination between the sexes came a generation after the new industrial system had drawn men away from work at home into places where women did not go. Only then did women begin to suffer the slightly contemptuous treatment of being left out, even if it was called sparing them pain and trouble.

Of course I realize that the persons who made the great public decisions during the time of which I write—the judges, theologians and great merchants—were men. This may have involved a theoretical injustice, but it was certainly one which did not rankle in the hearts of my great-grandmothers. It is a very different thing for the social structure to put one man in twenty in a position of wide power ahead of his wife, and to pull three men out of four away from their homes. One of my ancestors, Henry Plimpton, sat in the legislature in 1853, but I doubt if his wife, Susanna, felt his opportunities for public service were greater in the State House than her own had been in organizing a new church and public library for her community.

Let me take a sample out of each generation to indicate how life changed for the women of this probably typical family.

The earliest one for whom a distinct picture of personality remains is Deborah Fisher (1739-1828). When she was a girl in Dedham, the passion of her life was to go to school, but no school was provided for girls then. She had to learn to read by asking questions and by studying alone, except for one winter when her father and some other men hired a teacher for a few girls. This accomplishment set her somewhat apart from her own generation—she

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became quite noted as the girl who could read, and used to be called on to comfort the sick by reading the Bible to them. But what sets her apart from *our* generation is her impressive list of household accomplishments. The year before she was married she raised a crop of flax, prepared it for spinning, and spun and wove sheets, pillowcases and ticking for mattresses and feather beds. At the same time, she raised sheep, prepared the wool and spun and wove her own bed blankets. Nor could life have become much easier for her after she married John Lewis in 1758, for the couple raised six children on the land and labor of their farm at Walpole, Massachusetts.

As is true for most people, it was her old age that showed the true texture of Deborah's character. After she broke her hip at the age of sixty, she could never walk again except by pushing a chair in front of her. Up to that time she had ridden horseback to church with a grandchild behind her. Yet for almost thirty years longer she maintained her cheerfulness and usefulness. Her great-grandchildren could remember her at nearly ninety, sitting at her spinning wheel with her close white cap and clean checked apron. She still made thread for their sheets and towels, and mended the huge piles of clothes that were brought her from the clotheshorse, saying, "A stitch in time saves nine." Every evening she read her Bible, her "spiritual food"; and as long as she lived, the whole family loved to gather in her room to hear her stories or consult her about important decisions, "for she was aimiable and wise, and a referee in matters requiring wisdom and experience." A serene old age like this is no longer the easy outgrowth of a normal life. We might call this one test of a well-balanced society. Yet also by a more modern test, that of success, Deborah came through with colors flying; for her ideas, especially about education for girls, worked through the family clearly for at least four generations, and indirectly, of course, are still operating.

A very different set of problems confronted Ruth Allen (1768-1863) in the generation after Deborah's. Deborah's problem was to get an education; Ruth, on the other hand, was plunged into a pioneering situation and had to learn to live and make a living in it. As a marriage gift, her father, a Walpole carpenter, gave her

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a tract of land in Marlborough, New Hampshire, land which he probably acquired as a grant to Revolutionary veterans. In October of 1787, Ruth's fiancé, a young saddler named David Wilkinson, went up to get the land ready for his bride. He picked out a site for a house, cut the woods and burned them, built a log house, dug a well and sowed rye in the clearing. He and Ruth were married in the spring and set out for the new homestead with all their worldly goods on two horses. She carried a feather bed, linen and crockery on hers, while David loaded his with leather and tools for his trade. When they reached the log hut they found the rye as high as the roof, and at first they had to sleep in the loft at night, pulling the ladder up after them for fear of wolves.

It was not an easy thing to adjust to such an environment, and indeed, poor Ruth was so homesick that when her first baby was four weeks old she took her on her saddle and rode all the way back to her father's house, a distance of 125 miles. The tale says she reached home on the second night—which even for an unencumbered man would break most records. At home, apparently, no one either reproached her or urged her to return—these New Englanders had extraordinary respect for individuality—and probably because of that treatment, the time arrived when, as the record put it, "she could go back content."

"Content" for Ruth, nevertheless, always involved frequent visits to her first home; and she managed to make these profitable as well as pleasant by bringing down produce to sell. At first she sold woolen yarn and knitted socks, carried down like her babies on the saddle horse. On some of these trips she had the company of an old colored man, who immortalized himself in the family saga by remarking that he never knew before that white women had to go into the bushes. Later, when the road was built, she made her journeys in a large market wagon in which she carried eggs and butter. Her grandchildren used to enjoy their lively grandmother, and a trip in the old market wagon represented the high spot in their childhood. They also loved to listen to her jokes and stories, her favorite one being of how one night as a young girl she had entertained three young men at once without letting any of them know of the others' presence in the house. So we have a picture of

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another gay and entertaining old lady; even when she began to stumble she passed it off with the remark that she was still "spry." "She could fall down as quick as ever she could."

In the generation after this, life clearly became a little bit easier for women. There was a definite connection between the invention of baking soda, matches and "tin kitchens" (which stood up in front of the fireplace to roast meat) and the origin of women's clubs.

Nevertheless, as life became a bit more leisurely in the early 1800's, it also became more refined—and this meant a certain decline in spontaneity as well as rudeness, the beginnings of Victorian prudery. Instead of laughing heartily when the deacon, rising to pray in church, lost the narrow front piece of his pantaloons, the serious new generation would pretend not to notice. The temperance movement, too, began to gain headway, and there was a revival of the save-or-be-damned school of religious orthodoxy.

Still, the new life had new opportunities, and Susanna Gay (1796-1864) showed how they could be exploited as they came along. She married Henry Plimpton, a blacksmith's apprentice who bought a "water privilege" and started a small foundry. Susanna found herself called upon to run a general store in one wing of her house to accommodate the men who worked in the mill, and soon afterward she took charge of the books of the "Ladies' Literary and Moral Society" and thus, in effect, supplied the neighborhood with a public library.

The aim of this first women's organization in Walpole was to "promote a rational sociability" among the ladies of the church. To do this they met once a month at some member's house, and while one of their number read aloud from *Sermons to Young Women* or Hannah More's discourses on female education, the rest braided straw to be sold to hat factories. With the money thus earned they bought more books. So for the first time, women had practice in working together, in running an organization and handling the money they earned. This was a real innovation in the community, being different from anything the men had in their town meetings or militia practice—it was the beginning of the voluntary associations which handle so much of the sociability and so many of the good works in America today.

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In 1828, Susanna and some other souls in Walpole, outraged at the drift toward Unitarianism in the established church, decided to secede and form a more orthodox congregation. This was not so easy as it sounds, for the church was still part of the township and supported by taxation. In town meetings feelings grew bitter, and it was many years before any of the seceders could hope to win political office in town. Perhaps this was the reason why twenty women and only three men signed the first organization roll of the new church. (This is an interesting contrast to the South, where two generations later my husband's grandmother, a preacher's wife, felt it was neither necessary nor proper for women to organize anything, even a missionary circle.)

Susanna Plimpton was in the thick of all the work for the new church. She opened her home for Saturday prayer meetings and year after year was elected a directress of the new "Maternal Association." Gifted, capable, sociable, Susanna was the sort of person to whom her neighbors turned in any crisis. When she died, people somehow had the feeling that if she had not married so young she might have turned into a great intellectual figure. I do not believe she felt that way about herself. To be sure, she gave her daughters the best education then to be found and was undoubtedly pleased that one of them turned into a brave and successful missionary. At the same time, her letters show as much concern that the girls should wear sunbonnets to keep off freckles as that they should learn correct spelling. To me she seems more modern, combining interest in family and community, than many of the women who followed her in the latter part of the century.

For the girls who were born in the 1820's, the sweep toward Victorianism made life still more rarefied. No longer were they expected to play ball with the boys, or slide, or ride bareback after the cows, though they still did some of the milking. This was the first generation that did not have to learn to spin and weave—a heavy burden lifted; but at the same time, as part of the more earnest concern with religion, dancing went out for young people; and no more pranks, such as stuffing the pulpit Bible with a stack of playing cards, were played in church.

Nevertheless, there was still scope for energetic young women

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to use their abilities. Five girls were growing up at the Lewis farm at this time, and their great-grandmother Deborah was there to encourage their love of learning. The Lewises persuaded their neighbors to build a little schoolhouse nearby, with some parents giving labor and others giving materials. The children were trained meticulously in spelling and arithmetic, but their teacher also made them give reasons for what they knew. She introduced algebra, philosophy and astronomy, with a model of the solar system and a globe at her side. When Priscilla Lewis (1820-1889) went on from this school to Wheaton Academy, she was much surprised to find no equipment except blackboards, and hardly any books.

As the girls outgrew the neighborhood schools, they were sent away to the seminaries that were springing up all over New England. The very fact that they could be spared from home for a year or two at a time shows that women's work was getting lighter. The boys either could not be spared from the farm or were given vocational education for a trade, except for the few who went to Harvard to prepare for the ministry. So the women had a better liberal education on the whole than the men, a fact that is very evident from their letters. The girls had no chance to get lazy under this system, but their energies were not so completely taken up with the elemental struggle of food and clothing.

As the boys went to work at their trades, the girls too were able to find employment. Priscilla and all her sisters taught school before they were married, and thus represented the first generation for whom a paid job outside the home was freely available.

Marriage, however, still brought such formidable responsibilities for housekeeping that no one could have thought of continuing her job afterwards. Priscilla Lewis became engaged to Calvin Plimpton at the age of sixteen. Her younger sister remembered the courtship as follows: "The first time I suspected any devotion was when he offered me five cents to milk Priscilla's cows so she could go walking with him—then there was a picnic or something in Dedham and Calvin hired a team uptown. A remark there I remember by some prominent man, 'Calvin had a little the slickest team and a little the slickest girl in the crowd.' " During the interval of four years before they were married, Priscilla taught

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school and Calvin worked in his father's iron foundry and built an eight-room house for his bride.

Priscilla's life offered few conflicts, but increased leisure and refinement appear to have made new problems for her younger sister, Lizzie. Lizzie felt that life in the East was stagnant and that Walpole offered her neither culture nor adventure, so she toyed with the idea of going West. The Board of Education for the West, she says, offered "to find young ladies a home, pay their fare out, furnish part of their outfit and give a salary from seventy-five to three hundred dols. a year." Lizzie ended the letter outlining these plans plaintively, "I have no desire to be a burden to anyone. I hope I shall be wanted somewhere." This was a plea that would be echoed by energetic girls for the next three generations. Lizzie herself, however, never got West. Instead she went to Mount Holyoke, and soon thereafter married.

By the time my grandmother Idella Plimpton (1848-1941) was growing up, the changes in domestic work were coming faster and faster. Idella's father bought silks and muslins in Boston for making dresses, and the help of a seamstress was needed for making the elaborate modes of the day. Meanwhile the boys were beginning to buy their suits and overcoats in Boston. When his children were small, Calvin Plimpton used to go to a shoestore and bring out a huge box of assorted shoes, telling his nine young ones to pick out and keep whatever they could make fit. The family still grew a good share of food on their farm, but to vary the diet they had oysters by the barrel, raisins and figs by the basket, delicacies which Calvin would bring home from his business trips into the city. During this period too, the butcher wagon started coming around, making fresh meat available in seasons when no killings took place on the farm. These simplifications gave more free time for education (which now included the boys as well as the girls), travel, and those jobs outside the home which were still the expected occupation of a young girl before marriage.

At the age of fourteen, my grandmother lost her father; and her mother, Priscilla Lewis Plimpton, was left with a family in which her oldest boy was only twelve and the youngest, two. People told her she ought to sell her farm, but she believed that living there

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was good for the family and bravely put her twelve-year-old in charge of its operations. Meanwhile she kept up the family tradition of good education: her daughters went to seminaries which were soon to become colleges, while for the first time some of the boys went to college, and one son to medical school.

As for my grandmother, it happened that she was the first American college girl to spend her junior year abroad, for she was invited to go along with two of her Mount Holyoke teachers and another girl. In a way, this trip to Europe represented the flowering of the theory of education which the Lewises had been following for five generations. From the days when a desire for reading stirred in the heart of Deborah Fisher, every generation saw greater opportunity for its girls and rose to the occasion by giving it to them. Nowadays we are likely to think of 1870 as a time of formal manners, chaperons and great constriction for women. Nothing could be further from the truth about Idella's trip abroad. She moved with perfect spontaneity among young men and young women, never lacking a male escort, apparently never turning down a chance for strenuous fun such as walking over the Alps or through the dust of Vesuvius. During the winter, the Mount Holyoke party and three young American clergymen took an apartment together in Rome; and in a way they were freer than they might be today, for in the 1950's a mixed household of young unmarried persons might arouse suspicions which were warded off in those days by their perfect innocence. On the single occasion when Idella took some liberty with a young man which went beyond her teachers' idea of propriety (its exact nature unhappily shrouded behind an allusion in a letter), she was neither disciplined nor reproached but left to decide how she felt about it for herself. She probably felt pretty good; at least we have the young man's fervent assertion that he would commit the same indiscretion any time the future gave him an opportunity and his hope that she felt the same way. It is hard to see how anybody in any generation could have had more fun and friendship, or more freedom to learn about life.

Like her mother, my grandmother taught school until she was married and then devoted herself to bringing up her family. After that job was over, she was more or less retired to a position in which

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she was cherished and respected. Like her ancestress Deborah Lewis, she lived to be ninety, and also like her she was lame for the last thirty years of her life. I have no way of knowing whether she was as happy during those years, but certainly she was not nearly so much in the thick of family life and work. Deborah could help make important decisions for her family; but by 1920, so many of the questions that occupied the men of the family were in areas outside anything that Idella had ever encountered that often even whom to invite to dinner was not her decision.

The generation that was really put in a false position was that of my mother, Helen Kendall (1879-1913). She was sent to college, but not allowed to teach as she would have liked to do. Perhaps the men who kept her from it were right, for the women who did teach in that generation often did not marry. The world had time to waste now, and the men seemed to want women to be the ones to waste it. Some of them, like my mother, tried to keep busy with women's clubs and missionary study groups, and if she had lived longer I am sure she would have found more to do—but the point is that she had to look for it. The letters that passed to and from her Mount Holyoke classmates in the years following their graduation searched again and again the question of whether they were really justifying their education. For the first time a full job with full responsibilities was not pressed upon a girl. Other women in that period threw themselves into the fight for women's rights. They fought devotedly for this right, that their work should not be trivial—but in becoming serious, it somehow became forced. Very few women in that generation could sink back into any accepted role and feel natural.

This was why—when the 1920's came along—being good seemed less worthwhile than it had for generations. In a good society, virtue is quite literally its own reward; and by the same token, vice hardly needs inflicted punishment because it brings its own pain. When virtue goes stale, when its ordinary or expected rewards become too meager, then the hunt for fun—or fulfillment—becomes a matter of going after other rewards. A good deal of the fiction of the world, from *Tom Sawyer* to *Faust*, shows people in this predicament.

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Many things about our present society make our vices still precious to us. Nevertheless, it is eighty years since there has been as good a chance for men and women to live in the world as partners. It is not only that women won the right to go into parts of the world where men went, so that they now can think, talk and act in the same terms as their husbands, even if they do not work at the same type of job all their lives. Men are learning too—learning that they can, and in fact need to, help run their households; and the forty-hour week gives them a real chance to do so. The sort of work the world now requires is different from that of the days when Deborah Lewis wove her blankets and John Lewis made tallow candles on the same farm, but the mutual support and interest the two sexes can give each other are once more very similar. A few people, including some psychiatrists, still need to be convinced that women are not unsexed by being citizens, or men by taking active roles in their homes with their children. These two orientations have equal importance. Enough of a revolution has been accomplished, however, so that a person like me feels, in some ways, closer kinship with women three or four generations back than with the last two —even though we have every day to thank the mothers, aunts and grandmothers who tried to lay out new paths in which we can move today as happily as *their* mothers and grandmothers.

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THE FUTURE OF BOOKS IN AMERICA

This is the stenographic record of a discussion held at the home of Irita Van Doren, editor of the New York Herald Tribune *book section, on Thursday evening, January 14, 1954. Present were the following persons:*

LESTER ASHEIM
KNOX BURGER
HAROLD GUINZBURG
JOHN HERSEY
WALTER PITKIN, JR.
IRITA VAN DOREN

MRS. VAN DOREN: I think we are all aware that one of the big trends in publishing these days is the enormous growth of paperbacks. We are here this evening to discuss this trend and its effect. What paperbacks are doing to publishing today, how dependent trade publishing is on them, whether they're helpful or harmful—I'm going to ask each of you to express some opinion on this from your point of view.

Mr. Pitkin, let's start with you. I gather that you are very much interested in this paperback business and not entirely against hard-cover books. What have you got to say about it?

MR. PITKIN: That is right on both points. I am very sympathetic to the problem of the hard-cover book area, and am hopeful that the hard-cover field may be expanded more than it is at this time.

Would you like me perhaps to give some indication of the present status of paperbacked books?

MRS. VAN DOREN: I think that would be good.

MR. PITKIN: I think that the best place to start perhaps is a simple arithmetical comparison between, let's say, 1946, which was the first postwar year, and 1953, just closed. I believe in 1946 there were roughly 60 million paperbacks run off and distributed. That doesn't mean that they were all sold. Sixty million were sent out to the wholesalers and others who put these books on sale. Some percentage was returned in that year, perhaps 10 or 15 per cent.

MRS. VAN DOREN: What about 1953?

MR. PITKIN: In 1953, so far as we can tell, there were about 260 million taken off the presses, an increase of 200 million. Lord knows what percentage of the 260 million were returned. Certainly the sales in 1953, relative to the output, were lower —which is to say that the publishers are taking not just a higher return, but quite a good deal higher return of unsold copies

✪ LESTER ASHEIM is dean of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago.
✪ KNOX BURGER is editor of First Editions (original soft-cover books), Dell Publishing Company.
✪ HAROLD GUINZBURG is president of the Viking Press.
✪ JOHN HERSEY is author of *A Bell for Adano, Hiroshima, The Wall* and the recently published *The Marmot Drive.*
✪ WALTER PITKIN, JR., is executive vice-president of Bantam Books, Inc.

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from wholesalers. Partly because of competitive factors in the field, more titles are published than can ever be adequately displayed by the retailer.

MRS. VAN DOREN: And you say part of the reason for that gap is competition: there are more and more soft-cover publishers.

Mr. Burger, you have to do with soft-cover publishing. What is your feeling about that?

MR. BURGER: I would agree with Mr. Pitkin that the turn-back of paperbacks has risen to proportions that are disturbing to a great many soft-cover publishers. I think there are probably too many titles put out. I heard a figure of 1,200 titles published in soft covers in 1953. I don't know if that is correct; that is an estimate. I think there are probably too many companies in the business. I think it was the wartime beginning and the postwar flush of success that made them grow too quickly and get out of bounds.

In the long run, any publishing enterprise or any production technique that makes available very large quantities of an item—particularly an item that has the cultural significance of a book—is good and ought to be fostered and somehow ought to win through the growing pains and difficulties that one encounters on the way up.

It is possible to compare books with the production of automobiles. One of the basic principles of America's beginnings is making available large numbers of needed and wanted articles, and a book is a man-made thing, useful, to a very great degree, to all sorts of people. Some time in the future there will be a shaking-down process: some people will get hurt, and I hope the writer will be hurt less than the publisher, frankly, but I think everybody is going to touch fire and draw back his hand to a degree.

The paperback business is here to stay and here to grow. That is for the same simple reason that more Chevrolets are sold than Chryslers.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Guinzburg, from the publishers' point of view, the trade-book publishers', what do you think of the influx of paperbacks?

MR. GUINZBURG: I'm not at all sure that I have the right to answer that question from the point of view of trade-book publishers. I think I can answer it only in fairly personal terms, because I know I differ from some of my colleagues in the publishing field.

Offhand, no one can dispute what Mr. Burger has said about the desirability of more books being made available, and in fact what is happening today in the book field is in the pattern of what has happened to other articles in industry as a whole.

It does seem to me, however, that when we get into the realm of ideas we raise a whole set of problems that are not necessarily present when we are talking about automobiles or groceries or almost any of the other things that lend themselves to mass production and mass distribution.

My principal worry about what is happening in the book field is that the success of the paperback may push the whole book business in the direction of a mass industry. The characteristic of a mass industry is that it caters to the largest possible number of customers, and in that process may very well squeeze out those things that do not appeal to large numbers of people. My worry is that you may repeat in the book field what has happened in other fields—in entertainment and communication—you may make it increasingly difficult to do anything that is not geared to appeal to large low common denominators.

It remains to be seen, to be sure, whether it is the low, rather than the large, denominator that is going to govern. Already in this discussion, both Mr. Pitkin and Mr. Burger have referred to the fact that probably too many titles are now being published in the paperback field. It seems to me perfectly clear that if the numbers are going to be reduced, it is not necessarily going to be the poor-quality books that get eliminated; it may rather be those that are less salable.

At the same time, this is a danger: if the whole structure of book distribution shifts to be more and more dependent on

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the low-priced paperback, it may result in hard-back publishers finding themselves unable to publish much of what they now produce because—well, for a number of reasons. Among them is the possibility that the old-fashioned large bookstore that could carry a large range of assorted titles may find survival much more difficult. Therefore, there may be fewer means of distributing anything, let us say, that doesn't lend itself either to book club, paperback or other large-scale distribution, which would mean that we would find—

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Guinzburg, there are all sorts of angles to that, and I think it is a very important point you brought up. Let's go back to it in a minute, but right now let's ask Mr. Hersey how he feels paper-backed books affect the author.

MR. HERSEY: I would like to speak as Mr. Guinzburg did—for myself. I share some but not all of his worries. It seems to me that writing is a kind of reaching out and that the writer, the reacher, wants to touch somebody or something. And so it might be said that the more people he touches, the better; the more readers a book gets, the better; and I think that many writers welcome, are very glad to have, the enormous audience that paper-backed books have made possible.

A difficulty arises. I believe it stems from the relatively commercial nature of the paperback enterprise. Paper-backed books are distributed, as I understand it, through some 100,000, or perhaps even more, outlets. Mr. Burger already tonight has referred to the paper-backed book as an "item." At the meeting that the Authors' Guild had last spring on this problem, he said in passing that it is probably true that these books are less literature than they are (I think his words were) "a brazenly packaged commodity item." And I think that some of the difficulties, from the point of view of the writer who seeks this mass audience, come from the fact that because of the competition not only from magazines and other paper-backed books but from chewing gum, mints and toothbrushes, the paperback publishers have had to resort to more and more sensational devices.

No, I think you have to say now, "less and less sensational," but in the early years it was "increasingly sensational"—the use of lurid covers and blurbs, which did not reflect in all cases exactly what was in the book, but which were intended to attract the eyes of purchasers.

There are, as I understand it, about 2,000 good bookstores in the country. I don't share Mr. Guinzburg's worry that they will disappear, because I think when a person goes into a bookstore, he goes in to buy a book. When a person buys a paper-backed book, it may be only an auxiliary purchase.

I think there will always be readers and they will look for books wherever they are. The hope is that with an increasing readership which paper-backed books have helped to build, there will be more and more people going directly for books, and that it will be less and less necessary in the long run to use these—well, packaging techniques to attract them, and that there may be a more stable situation than we have at the moment.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Asheim, you have heard all these different expressions from people who are in one way or another deeply concerned with book publishing. You have a somewhat more detached position, I believe. I wish you would comment a little, after having heard this, on what you think paper-backed books are going to do, how they're going to affect taste, American culture, if you will.

MR. ASHEIM: I'm afraid I'm not competent to deal with as large a subject as that. I would like to react, if I may, to just some of the things that have been said.

One thought that occurred to me immediately as Mr. Burger was speaking is that there seemed to be an underlying assumption that all books are an article of culture. This seems not to be the case. There are books and books. That being so, to create a large audience for the undifferentiated book may or may not be a contribution to the welfare of the community.

This leads us then immediately to make some kind of judgment about the value

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of the particular content, and it would seem to me that Mr. Guinzburg's distinction between the articles of commerce, "items," and the book as a medium through which ideas are conveyed makes clear what I think are two different levels on which books may be considered.

It seems to me that when we start dealing with the book as a medium for communicating ideas that are perhaps worth preserving—here I suppose my librarianship background comes in—we find that one of the functions of the book has been that it is a very excellent medium for preserving ideas. Tonight, however, we have been talking almost exclusively about the current market: what books will people buy and read right now? But it may take a long, long time for the ideas worth preserving in book form to be accepted or to reach the audience for whom they are intended. To emphasize the immediate market is not the best way to get to the ideas worth preserving.

The question that I would raise is whether the paper-backed book—and what we are really talking about here is not format, of course, but the means of production, the mass production, mass distribution—whether under such a system, the unpopular idea can be held long enough so that the audience that is interested in it will have a chance to know that it is there, to weigh it, to accept it or reject it over a time. As it is now, it seems to me that the mass audience must accept it immediately or this is the end of the idea and it doesn't find expression.

MRS. VAN DOREN: You speak of one of the values of a book as a medium in which ideas can be preserved, the ideas that are worthwhile. There is also the need to get acquainted with ideas, and that can sometimes be done in a form that isn't lasting; and perhaps then the reader, if he really becomes interested, can find the book in more permanent form later.

MR. ASHEIM: I don't know if I follow what other forms you suggest.

MRS. VAN DOREN: The hard-cover book, which can be kept on the shelf or found in the library, after one has first been awakened to an interesting idea perhaps in the soft-cover book.

MR. ASHEIM: This is possible, except again—and I think those who know about this ought to correct me if I'm wrong—the chance of coming across it in a soft-cover book is much less, just because the book remains available for so short a period. It is very difficult to get at everything that is in soft covers because those on display are constantly changing under the system of distribution which now obtains.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Perhaps one point you have suggested is something Mr. Pitkin might tell us a little more about—the different kinds of soft-cover books. We are assuming that they are all exciting and popular in some way, but there are different kinds.

MR. PITKIN: Indeed there are many different kinds of soft-cover books. We all, I think, very generally recognize that there are mysteries and westerns, of course, which are statistically a large part of the field, but there are also novels and books of nonfiction. And when we take an area such as the novel and examine it closely, we find that the variation there is as great as the variation within the whole field, because you find everything from the lowest grade of formula-writing—poor magazine writing—to the very best writing that is being done in this country today.

I think there are at least three publishers in the field, at least three important publishers, who are, to a degree, competing for what I consider to be the best sort of fiction—

MRS. VAN DOREN: In the soft-cover field, you mean?

MR. PITKIN: Exactly. I think it is necessarily so; it is necessarily true that the total amount of the best writing that you will find in paper covers is small because there is not enough good writing being done. We are constantly on the lookout for better books of varying kinds. We don't want one book to be like another; but just as a hard-cover publisher, I am sure, always feels that there may be one or two books on his list for the spring or the

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fall that stand out above the others, we find that when we go through all their lists and attempt to make the best list that we can, only a certain percentage of the books are truly outstanding as creative works.

We believe it is important to find such writing because—I believe this, in any case—the person who is looking for a book, whether it be in hard covers or in soft covers, wants something that is different from magazine fare.

In the area of non-fiction, we find an increasing amount of material available in soft covers. Many publishers today are increasing their non-fiction list, not only in the popular "how to do it" categories, but also in the areas of philosophy and other subjects of interest in adult education. I think the number of titles has gone up and the total sale of important and significant non-fiction has increased.

MR. GUINZBURG: Without going into the broad aspects, I would simply like to register a very strong dissent to what Mr. Pitkin just said, because, although I quite agree with him that a great many excellent books—a great many novels and a great many non-fiction books of the highest quality—have been done by the paperbacks, I think he's quite wrong when he says that they cover the whole range that is covered by hard-back publishing.

There are a lot of books—considered good by those who are supposed to know something about it—that often have sold very well in their original editions and simply won't be considered by any of the reprint publishers, for one reason or another. They'll say, "This isn't the sort of book that goes in our format." They will not say, "It is a bad book." They simply say, "This isn't the sort of thing that we can sell well."

Whether biography, essays or fiction—any hard-back publisher can, by going down his list, put his finger on author after author who is highly regarded, and, as I said, in many cases reasonably popular, who has had no reprints at all and who won't be considered by any of them.

MR. PITKIN: I didn't intend that my last remarks should be taken to mean that the paperback publishers cover the whole range of hard-cover books. That is not true, and it would be absurd to hold it true.

In the first instance, I was simply discussing fiction. I do agree with you that any publisher who has soft-cover books may say to you and will say to you and to other publishers of hard-back books that a particular book—some book that you like, and a good book, let us say—is not the sort of thing that he can sell in paperbacks. But the fact that he cannot sell it—or he, in his opinion, cannot sell it—does not mean that it can't be done. He is an individual publisher, just as you are an individual publisher, and I am sure that there are many books that you would like to publish but find yourself unable to publish. Let's be frank about this and say right away that different publishers have different talents. Some of the competitors of Bantam Books have people on their staffs who are able to see things and to analyze various areas of fiction and non-fiction which we are unable to handle; but we think there are things we can do that they can't do, and I think they'll admit that, too.

So you have these individual differences, and I think it's good to keep them in mind when we are discussing what can be done in the different areas of hard-cover and paper-backed publishing.

MR. ASHEIM: May I ask a question? I think Mr. Burger might tell us whether he means that he believes that in the future the paper-backed book will replace absolutely the hard-bound book along the whole range of publication. Or did you mean, Mr. Burger, that paper-bound publishing would be a growing phenomenon but that hard-bound books would always cover certain areas of publishing?

MR. BURGER: I would like to evade an immediate, direct answer to your question and maybe work around the bush. Certain of you have mentioned my own use of the phrase "an item" or "a commodity," and I was being deliberately and perhaps defensively hard-boiled about the distribution and the marketing methods for these books.

I feel that the increased number of read-

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ers is a forward move made by the paper-backed book business. Mr. Hersey said that he understood that there were 2,000 good bookstores. I don't believe that the American Booksellers Association would agree with those figures. I don't think that there are that many by a good deal. I think they have been diminishing. I think this is very sad, but it happens to be a fact. There are well over 100,000 outlets for soft-cover books. The inventories are very badly kept. There are far too many titles. There is too much competition for the limited space available.

I do not think of books as "items" comparable to chewing gum. I hope I know the difference between a good book and so-called category fiction. I have read a great many of the former and, like most editors, have bought a good deal of the latter.

I think that in the scramble to see these books sell—I am not directly connected with the selling of the books and I am not a publisher, nor a distributor, nor really qualified to speak authoritatively about what sells and what does not sell—in this scramble, which is obviously taking place, I think publishers are being pushed (I mean soft-cover book publishers are being pushed) to exploit the opportunity and try to reach more and more kinds of people. I think that there is an increasing number of books available for 25 to 50 or 80 cents which are not aimed at the man who has come to a drugstore to buy a pack of chewing gum.

Anchor Books are a case in point. Many of the Mentor Books are another case in point. I think that the mass distribution techniques have inspired the cheap reproduction of the world's great treasures, artistic and literary.

To give you a fact about this thing currently, there are several strong indications that the poorer quality books, the books that exploit the lowest possible common denominators, hitting the same nerves over and over again, are hurting the publishers more than the more varied—the more esoteric, if you will—and I think Mr. Pitkin will probably agree.

I have in mind a particular publisher, whom I shall not name, who has material piling up in warehouses, returned copies, a good deal more than the rest of us: his whole slant and approach have been to hit the lowest common denominator. It doesn't displease me that he is hurt to the degree that he is said to be.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Do you get reports from authors, through the Authors' Guild, Mr. Hersey, that their books in original hard covers are helped or picked up again by a later soft-cover publication job?

MR. HERSEY: It has been a fairly generally accepted idea for a number of years that in those cases where a book is held for soft-cover publication for two or three years after its original hard-cover publication, there may be a renewed sale that comes probably mostly from the sales of soft-cover books in areas where there are no bookstores at all.

MRS. VAN DOREN: But they are not waiting two years now to put a book into soft covers as a rule.

MR. HERSEY: Some publishers still are.

MR. BURGER: Does it not depend upon the book?

MR. HERSEY: Yes, of course. Taking up what Mr. Burger said, I think it is certainly true that some remarkable books, some remarkably good books, are getting on the soft-cover publishers' list now.

I wonder whether part of the difficulty that soft-cover publishers are now facing, from what you said earlier, Mr. Burger, may not come from the kind of illusion that the mass-distribution, mass-production method of paperback sales brought about in the early days when the field was not quite so crowded and there were 150,000 or 200,000 places to sell a book. It was possible in the early days to send out 200,000 copies of a book and be fairly sure that most of them would be sold.

It turned out in the early days that that was even true of books which were not mysteries, westerns and so on. It turned out that books could be distributed and sold even if they were novels and in many cases fairly good novels.

But many new firms have come into the

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field, and now perhaps it has turned out that the audience for good books is not so solidly developed as we hoped it was; the illusion that *anything* could be sold has had to give way. Perhaps the new reading audience needs time to catch up with the new quality it is being offered.

MR. BURGER: It may well be.

MR. PITKIN: I can pick up right there, if I may. I'm sorry to say that I think there was a time when the audience was miles ahead of the publishers. I have been in the soft-cover book field since 1939 and full-time since 1941, and I don't think anything goes back of 1939 in this country.

I think there was a dividing line in 1947 in the world of soft-covers. Down to that time the soft-cover book was looked upon purely as a book, whether it was a mystery or a novel like Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, which was published among our first releases.

But in 1947, a number of things started to happen. For the first time we tried adaptation of magazine art on the covers of small books; Bantam Books was the innovator in this particular instance. Thereafter, because results were so good, all the firms went over exclusively to magazine art from the earlier form of more or less abstract representation or typographical covers or simply cartoons or line drawings of one kind or another.

Sales had been growing until then and continued to grow in the aggregate; and it was only two and a half years later that one publisher came into the field with books that weren't books at all, but were simply what I call magazine formula material expanded sufficiently to fill out 160 pages.

Now I believe that down to 1947—and I draw the line very conveniently there, though it may not be too accurate to insist upon that—I believe that down to 1947, everybody who had read a paperback thought of them simply as books at a lower price.

I am very sorry, but I don't believe they think this today. I think that a very important part of our market or our potential market now thinks of paperbacks as low-grade magazine material.

MRS. VAN DOREN: That is an unfortunate trend, if it is true.

MR. PITKIN: I hope it is a trend that is now being reversed. I happen to agree with Mr. Hersey that, for example, the illustrations being used generally on paperback covers are not sensational to the degree that they were, and as a matter of fact, I think that many publishers are now thinking about the abandonment of the adapted magazine illustration for the cover.

At the same time, the publisher who has gone most deeply into the magazine formula book is the publisher who is feeling most severely the effects of the present poor market in paperbacks.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Larger returns?

MR. PITKIN: Larger returns and smaller sales. It has become quite fashionable to talk about the problems of the hard-cover publisher; I think it's going to be a little more fashionable in 1954 to talk about the problems of the soft-cover publisher.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Guinzburg looks rather happy over there.

MR. GUINZBURG: I think that maybe we are spending a little too much time and emphasis on the year 1954 and its problems with this current over-supply that some publishers are feeling more than others. It is a very short-range problem.

These things happen in all sorts of businesses. Whether the paperback publishers are raising their standards and changing their covers is also a little too new. They may be doing this because there has been a lot of censorship around the country, or it may be a permanent policy, but it seems to me that we cannot talk too intelligently about something that is true of only the current months.

It seems to me that the long-range problems, which may be very difficult to analyze, are nevertheless much more interesting and important.

MRS. VAN DOREN: I agree with you, and I wish we would talk a little about them.

MR. HERSEY: Well, before we go to that, I would like to pick up one thing that Mr. Guinzburg said in passing, about the at-

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tempts to censor certain kinds of paper-backed books.

I think there are indications in this area of censorship that tend to show that the paperback audience is not yet the same audience as that for the hard-cover books. Indeed, there are some curious differences in this area of censorship. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* sold, I think, about 45,000 hard-cover copies, and when distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club sold about 150,000. It was bought by libraries all over the country and was favorably reviewed; and so far as its hard-cover life is concerned, there were, to my knowledge, no questions asked about immorality and so on. But when it got into paperbacks it ran into trouble in many cities over the country, even though its jacket, by the way, was not gaudy. I gather that the censoring body known as the Georgia Literature Commission held hearings on the book, and that it was banned by police chiefs and citizen-censors in several cities.

Why the difference in this treatment between hard-cover and paper-backed book?

MR. ASHEIM: I think that is a typical phenomenon in censorship. The larger the potential audience, the more restricted the subject matter—just as you can say in a book things that you cannot say on the stage when a stage version is made of it. And you can say on the stage some things that cannot be said on the screen.

MR. GUINZBURG: And on the screen, things that cannot be done on television.

MR. ASHEIM: It is not a matter of books or the format, but rather that the potential audience is much greater, that the price is low, and that therefore youngsters may be reached as well as adults. At least this is the rationale that is put forward when a book which has been going around for years in hard covers with no trouble at all suddenly becomes banned when it is put into a paper cover.

MR. HERSEY: I think this is probably a big factor, but I think it is probably more complex than that, because many of the books which have run into censorship trouble in paperback form have been the relatively good books—that is to say, books which are more or less in the classic area rather than the really sensational books. And there have been cases of straight pornography published (not by these gentlemen, I am sure) in paperback form which have not run into censorship, while books by Faulkner, Caldwell and many others have been stopped.

Now, there's a qualitative factor, some kind of cultural factor that operates in censorship—goodness knows. Mickey Spillane is better known to some of our youngsters than Salinger.

MR. ASHEIM: The question I raised is whether this is a reflection of the reading audience, which I think is the underlying assumption, or whether a particular group sets itself up to censor.

MRS. VAN DOREN: You mean that the group that sets itself up to censor is assuming that the large audience is going to be offended or hurt or something like that?

MR. ASHEIM: That's right.

MR. PITKIN: I think it is a non-reading group.

MR. BURGER: Yes, and they erupt like boils in towns all over the country, and all it takes is half a dozen clubwomen and one chief of police and you have a big censorship problem.

The best book I have had, in my opinion, is a book that was read in advance of publication by one of Mr. Guinzburg's authors, John Steinbeck, and he was kind enough to say a good word for it. We put his endorsement on the cover. It has gotten very good reviews universally, and yet it has been banned in Detroit—I assume because of the inclusion of a four-letter word know by every schoolchild.

The book is by no means an attempt to titillate. It is by no means salacious. It is by no means offensive to morals. It is a story of tremendous courage.

The censors who set themselves up must find handles, and they must set up various rules, special lines beyond which the publishers shall not go; and if a writer or a publisher knows those rules, he can dodge in and out and put out very meretricious material and still not get banned. I've seen it happen time and again.

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MR. PITKIN: As to your question as to why it is that Mickey Spillane runs into little or no trouble and books of real literary stature and genuine merit seem to run into somewhat more trouble, I think it can be said that the people who are most interested in censorship and the activators are those who are concerned with thought control. They wish to enforce a kind of conformity on our society, and it is not surprising, if that is so, that they see little to complain about or be uneasy about in Mickey Spillane.

MR. HERSEY: I still think that the gentlemen who publish paper-backed books have to take some responsibility in this area, because they have helped to build up a large new audience. One of the reasons why the censors are interested—it has been built up primarily, or at least most noticeably, on books that are sensational literature. That has been the main reason why censorship has been turned to the paper-backed books, along with comic books and some of the more sensational moving pictures, as main targets of its attack.

It does seem to me a different audience from the hard-cover one. The paper-cover audience has defined itself by buying so many books—as David Dempsey of the *New York Times* said at that same meeting last spring—on sex, sensation and statutory rape.

MR. PITKIN: I am sure there are publishers of hard-cover books that Mr. Guinzburg would hesitate to shake hands with. He can correct me if I'm wrong. There are also publishers of paper-backed books with whom I would hesitate to pass the time of day or be seen with on the street.

I don't like to be roped into a group with my neighbor unless I think my neighbor is a man like me, and I assume that Mr. Burger would feel also that it is not actually fair to look at this field and condemn it on the basis of some sensational books.

I happen to agree with you, however, that some of the most notorious books that have been published have made it much easier for the censors to pick on all paper-backed books, because there has been a tendency to lump paperbacks together—and I think they in fact do lump them together. I think they should be stopped from doing so; I think it is an error for us who are in this room to do so.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Don't you think the reason for the tendency to lump them together is that they've sprung up so fast?

MR. PITKIN: And because they are all for sale in the corner drugstore and candy store.

MRS. VAN DOREN: And at a small range of price.

MR. PITKIN: Exactly.

MR. GUINZBURG: I don't think it is surprising that this has happened. As long as the books were selling at a reasonably high price, they were going almost entirely to sophisticated, educated people who went into bookstores or belonged to a book club. Suddenly these same books, often with lurid covers, are available for sale at candy stores. And when a great many people who've no knowledge of books go in for a coke and suddenly come upon this rack full of lurid looking things available for a quarter to their kids, then they get upset. They don't know enough to distinguish. They don't know enough to say, "Well, some of these may be very good and some may be very bad." They are outraged by the total thing that they have seen.

I'm not defending censorship, but I think it is perfectly understandable with this new display on every corner. People should worry about it, but should not be dismayed about it.

MR. PITKIN: It is quite understandable.

MR. BURGER: I think it should be pointed out for the record that about 90 per cent of the books that are on the NODL [National Organization for Decent Literature] banned list, and most other books that have run into trouble in the various communities where there is censorship, are reprints of trade editions which were not considered to be questionable.

Let us not put the rap on soft-covers, for most of them are reprints. Even Mickey Spillane is not an original soft-cover writer.

MR. HERSEY: That is true, but the point I made before still holds, that they are not

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censored as hard-covered books, for reasons we have discussed.

MR. BURGER: Sure.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Guinzburg, let's get back to some of the questions you raised just now of the future possibilities and future tendencies, dangers and benefits in all this. That may be more fruitful than some of the present discussion.

MR. GUINZBURG: Well, to go back to some of the more general things. At the beginning of our discussion, the paperback publishers here pointed out the limitation on the number of copies that can be absorbed as far as we know at present by the stationery store, the newsstand, the limited space outlets, in which these books are sold. To be sure, this may change in the future, but that is the present system, a system in which a certain number of square feet are given to this merchandise that might be given to candy bars or something else.

These books are sold at a very low margin of profit to the dealer. That means in turn that it is inevitable that there is no expert advice available; nobody who sells these books can afford clerks who know what is inside of them. These books must sell themselves from their title, their cover, the author's name occasionally. That is the nature of this form of distribution. Now, if it is true that the number of titles that can be handled adequately is limited, and if we don't see any mechanism for keeping them, as Mr. Asheim pointed out before, in permanent or more or less permanent supply, as a great many hard-cover books are, you may very well find that there is only room in this type of outlet for the quick-selling, short-lived book. It may be a very good book; it may be a very bad book.

One of the great problems, as I see it, is what happens to everything else. The bookstore has been declining as an outlet. This year, in New York City, what used to be the two biggest outlets have contracted. Brentano's has given up part of its main store and Macy's has moved its book department from the ground floor to an upstairs floor. This is indicative of what is happening throughout the country.

There are very few new bookstores being started. Those that are being started are much more likely to be smaller stores in a busy neighborhood, which inevitably will handle only the reasonably popular things because they're not like the old-fashioned bookstore that had a large, slow-moving stock; and I think every hard-cover publisher will tell you that it is more and more difficult to get any distribution for any book on his list that isn't in one way or another conspicuous—isn't by a famous author or in some way sensational.

Now remember also that, just as in everything else, costs in publishing have gone up enormously, without a commensurate increase in sale which might have offset the higher costs. It is constantly becoming more difficult for a hard-cover publisher to publish the books which he thinks he would like to publish, which he thinks in some way are worth publishing.

If this goes on, if these trends continue—and I don't blame them entirely on paperbacked books, I merely think they are an important factor in the picture—if these trends continue, you are simply going to have fewer and fewer books being published.

Now people may very well say, "Aren't there too many books being published anyway?" Publishers answer, "Yes, there are," but no two will agree on which ones need to be dropped, and one of the glories of book publishing has been that it's been the one medium in which something that somebody wanted to write could be made available to a relatively small number of people.

I gloomily predict that this will decrease, and it will be harder and harder to do that sort of publishing. In fact, it may become impossible to do it except on a subsidized basis, and although I don't object to the sort of subsidy that is very nobly used by the university presses in many cases and by various other learned groups, I think there is an enormous loss to culture if fewer voices can be heard expressing themselves through books.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Isn't it also true, though, Mr. Guinzburg, that many publishers feel that they couldn't publish some books, perhaps even what they consider

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very good books, if they did not have the chance of the extra income from a cheap paper edition?

MR. GUINZBURG: Of course, it is true. But may I cite one example of a discussion something like this that I was in a while ago, when one of the reprint publishers not present tonight ran to the defense of the paperback and the work which reprint publishers can do? He used the example of Mr. William Faulkner. He pointed out what a small sale he had had and how at last, through inexpensive books, Faulkner was reaching a wide market. This is undoubtedly true. I don't blame him for using that to support his position. It's a very fine case.

The thing I worry about, however, could be explained in terms of that example. I remember that Mr. Faulkner had a very difficult time being published—or I should say, his publishers had a very difficult time publishing him—over the period of a number of books. And I think we have to ask ourselves whether there may not be the next Faulkner, now in his twenties, unable to find a publisher at all because hard-cover publishing by itself is so much more difficult. One can think of the editorial meeting in which somebody says: "Well, yes, this youngster has got an awful lot of talent. But gosh, no book club sale, no reprint sale —we'll probably sell 1,122 copies of this. We can't do it."

MR. ASHEIM: This is a question I wanted to raise earlier about the situation if paperback mass distribution took over.

It is quite true that paper-bound books now contain titles of considerable stature, but the question is whether they would have ever got into paperbacks without their original publication in hard covers. In other words, what are the chances in 1980 for that year's Kafka or Joyce or Virginia Woolf to get published when fiction is published only on a mass-distribution level?

MR. BURGER: This is certainly a very relevant question. I would like to give two examples from my own list of inventory.

One is a book by a young man in his early thirties—a rather quiet and serious novel. His first book was published by Scribner's and was well received critically; it didn't sell many copies. Well, I have undertaken to publish this second book; and I confess he has put a title on it which, while very apt for the book and a fine, symbolic and right title, is also a selling title. If I seem cynical, I am sorry, but I feel that this title will carry the book. I think the book is not a natural for mass distribution, but, taking a deep breath, I'm going to do it.

I suspect it might be a book about which many trade publishers today would go through the routine that Mr. Guinzburg has just gone through: "We can't get Book-of-the-Month Club. We may not be able to sell subsidiary rights. Well, can we afford to do it?"

I have a degree of faith that it is not going to fall back on my publisher and handicap him with return copies, nevertheless it's a chance I'm taking; and actually we're putting much more money into the first printing of this book than a trade publisher would be putting into a similar book, for he might be printing 3,000, and our economics is such that we must do a printing of 200,000 or 300,000.

Another book that I have—I might say in the confines of this room that I got only by accident—is a book that should have gone to Mr. Guinzburg or another trade publisher, given the present situation of distribution of paper-backed books and their relatively low degree of literary acceptance. It happened to come to me. It's a book, I feel, that almost any trade publisher would be very happy to publish. It's a first novel, and it would sell many copies for the trade publishers and would get good reviews and perhaps bring a very high price from such reprint publishers as Mr. Pitkin and others. Now, given the present set of circumstances, I will try to arrange some kind of trade publication for this book almost entirely because of the author. I feel that he deserves a hearing in the present complex of soft- and hard-covers. I think he needs to get into hard-covers for the benefit of the reviews he might get and the chance of making the best-seller lists.

I fully expect that there will be a day when, as in France, there will be original

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publication of first-rate, major new novels in soft covers.

This brings me back to the distribution techniques, a basic question. They may well be in need of revision. I think the possibility of mail order is only just beginning to be exploited. I think the possibilities of the specialized book in a specialized market, while not to be done in lots of 200,000 and 300,000, are perhaps good for 20,000 to 50,000 to 80,000—I think we'll be driven to that and I think it's a fine thing that we'll be driven to it.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Well, what about Ballantine, in his new plan of publishing hard-covers and soft-covers at the same time, or soft-covers in conjunction with some trade publisher who will simultaneously get out a hard-cover edition?

MR. BURGER: I don't know about the feasibility of publishing the same—forgive me—"item" at $2.50 and again at $.25, $.35, or $.50. The fact that the same book is obtainable at one-tenth of the price is going to hurt terribly when you try to charge $2.00, $3.00 or $5.00 for it simultaneously. I don't think this situation will obtain for long, but if a book deserves to be reviewed, and if sales are increased because of good reviews, under the present circumstances I think a publisher should take it upon himself to try to arrange for hard-cover publication.

MR. PITKIN: It seems to me that Mr. Burger has stated a personal attitude in relation to the problem that Mr. Guinzburg posed. I don't think that that reaction, laudable as it is, is in point of fact an answer to the kind of situation which Mr. Guinzburg foresees as a possibility at least.

MR. GUINZBURG: His cases may be good, but I think he puts them as exceptions rather than as an indication that the basic point I made is not valid.

MR. PITKIN: I would regard them at least as exceptions, and I have some reasons for looking upon them in this light. One of them is that, as Mr. Burger says himself, there are too many publishers in the paperback field; and yet at the moment there are really only about fifteen to twenty firms operating at a good margin, and eight of them don't count because they're simply taking any kind of low-grade material they can lay their hands on and getting it on the stands.

MR. BURGER: They count to the customer.

MR. PITKIN: Quantitatively and statistically only, and what we're left with is a situation in which you have ten or twelve publishers at the outside who are the least bit concerned with any of the problems we have discussed here this evening.

On the other hand, Mr. Guinzburg is in a field where there are—I don't know the figures exactly—well, how many trade publishers would you say there are, Mr. Guinzburg? Upward of fifty?

MR. GUINZBURG: Yes. Actually I think it's eighty that belong to the Book Publishers Council.

MR. ASHEIM: There are thirty of them that actually publish five titles during the year.

MR. GUINZBURG: Many more than that.

MR. PITKIN: It would seem so.

I happen to think that the question we have been discussing here tonight, the future of hard-back books as against the future of paper-backed books, is really the question of the future of reading in America. I wonder how many people in this room saw a survey that Dr. Gallup put out in November. I think it was most likely in the *New York World-Telegram* and syndicated. It showed that in the United States, 17 people out of 100, 17 per cent, when interviewed said they were reading a book. In England, 55 per cent said they were reading a book. That may strike you as a shocking comparison, but I think a more dangerous fact is inherent in another figure, which I think was that a year or two ago in this country 22 per cent said they were reading a book, whereas today only 17 per cent were. I don't know whether those figures are actually indicative of how many people are in point of fact reading books, but I am afraid they are indicative of opinion; and I'm afraid that reading books is a little less respectable than it was two or three years ago, and it is a lot less respectable here than it is in England.

I think it is this kind of problem that we

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are all dealing with as we look at our own business problems or our problems as writers.

I would like to know—I don't know if there's anybody in this room who can shed any light on this—but I would like to know how Americans can be interested in more and better books and how book-reading can be made a more respectable pastime than it apparently is today.

MRS. VAN DOREN: I am surprised that you use the word "respectable."

MR. PITKIN: Well, I wanted to use the word "respectable" because I thought about it, and I'm sticking to it. I think that the whole climate of anti-intellectualism in this country, which I am afraid has been reinforced considerably in the last four or five years, is closely involved with concepts such as respectability. I just happen to think that if reading books were a more respectable occupation, or pastime, or whatever you choose to call it, more people would identify the thing they were reading as a book, and you'd get a higher figure than 17 per cent.

MRS. VAN DOREN: You don't think it is just a question of other forms of entertainment that are cutting into reading?

MR. PITKIN: I think that that question exists importantly, but I don't think it is just that question. I know too many people who would rather just not be seen with a book and would rather say, as in the case of a printer that I know, a well-educated man, "We print them; we don't have to read them too, do we?"

MRS. VAN DOREN: Surely that question does not mean that the printer was thinking of respectability.

MR. PITKIN: I'm afraid it enters into it.

MR. ASHEIM: There's no implication in what you said, though, that in fact paperbound books have had any effect in the drop in respectability?

MR. PITKIN: No, I didn't mean to imply that.

MR. ASHEIM: In other words, this is a separate problem, that is not related to one or the other method of publication.

MR. PITKIN: I think anti-intellectualism, as a matter of fact, predated paperbacks. The forces already existed in this country which are pointed toward less emphasis on education beyond a grade-school level, or at least on educational content beyond that level.

MRS. VAN DOREN: On the other hand, the amount of reading of non-fiction books —biography, history, public affairs—has increased steadily while other reading has gone down.

MR. GUINZBURG: You say "increased"—I think we ought to consider the term "increase" in relative rather than in absolute terms. Think of what has happened in this country in the twentieth century in terms of the growth of the well-to-do, literate, leisured population; of a population that has doubled; of the educational level, which has increased so fantastically that there are at present five times as many people in colleges as there were in high schools at the beginning of the century; of the leisure time that has increased tremendously, and all the ease of life—then ask yourself if the reading of non-fiction books has increased or kept anything like the pace of the increased potential that we might have expected in the light of those circumstances. No, I believe you get a very discouraging picture, instead of an optimistic one.

MRS. VAN DOREN: I think that is true, Mr. Guinzburg, but it is a fact that the reading of fiction has gone down in the same period; and though reading of serious non-fiction books may not have increased as it should, the reading of fiction is relatively in a much worse state.

MR. BURGER: How about the writing of fiction?

MR. PITKIN: I would like to ask Mr. Guinzburg a question. I really have only an impression here, and no exact information, but I'd like to know whether any expansion that has taken place in the reading of hard-covered non-fiction hasn't been in the purely inspirational and non-informational books.

MR. GUINZBURG: I think you're quite right. I think that there are a great many kinds of non-fiction that actually sell less

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well than they used to. I think the total of non-fiction has increased, but that is only true of certain kinds.

MR. PITKIN: Would you say generally of the less profound variety?

MR. GUINZBURG: I think it's frightfully hard to make that sort of qualitative judgment.

MR. BURGER: I do know that in going back over the best-seller lists, back to the turn of the century, you will find certain inspirational material and self-help books of a so-called spiritual nature prominently featured.

MR. PITKIN: That's a recurrent phenomenon.

MR. BURGER: And that has been constantly so with the growth in population.

MR. HERSEY: Don't TV and other cultural factors tend somewhat to decrease reading in the country generally, outside the province of our discussion? It seemed to me that Mr. Burger made some interesting points earlier that may be germane—when he talked about the need for renewed scrutiny of the distribution methods in the paperback field. Evidently, from what Mr. Guinzburg said, that may also be necessary in the hard-cover field; and maybe there is some new kind of publishing that we had better think about for the future, to reach those readers we still have.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Have you any ideas at all as to what sort of publishing that would be?

MR. HERSEY: I would like to ask Mr. Burger whether thinking is being done in the paperback field about the subject of distribution. Are there any discussions among publishers or in the industry?

MR. BURGER: I operate peripherally at that level, and I cannot give you any definitive answers. I do know that at my level, as an editor, this problem is becoming more acute. And as far as all the techniques of publishing are concerned, I am sure that over half of the thirty to eighty trade publishers that Mr. Guinzburg and Mr. Asheim spoke of exist only because of selling subsidiary rights. They would be out of business were it not for this. I think that such a system is somehow bound to get revised and get controlled differently.

The soft-cover publishers have grown up in two different ways, as I see it—little as I know of it. One—Mr. Pitkin's Bantam Books is an example—has been an expansion of interest among various trade publishers, an attempt to capture a new market, to exploit new techniques. Then there is the line of books put out by the publishers for whom I work, for example. This line is an outgrowth of a mass distribution of periodicals, of a massive operation which is very costly. They want to keep the machinery going. They must find the best ways to keep up with what is being done in techniques; and they think more in terms of the point of sale and of the presses and the sales channels—not like the Bantam operation, which started from a publisher's office, where they're thinking directly of the reader.

As far as new techniques for distributing these books go, there are certain signs either for better or worse. There is Anchor Books; there is the new line called Key Books. The first two titles had to do with the life of Gandhi by Louis Fischer and a "success-in-marriage" book. Well, I will put up with every success-in-marriage book if you get an intelligent life of Gandhi to go along with it.

Ballantine has quietly put its books into two different mail-order systems. Obviously, they are for category fiction, the western and science fiction, but a feeler is being put out in this direction.

MR. GUINZBURG: Mr. Burger has mentioned Anchor Books, which was mentioned once before. It seems to be somewhat out of the category we were talking about, because Anchor Books, as I see it, is not really a mass-medium operation. It is an attempt to do relatively inexpensive books for specialized markets, and consequently has to charge three or four times as much as the mass-medium operation does. It is much more on a book basis than on a magazine basis. It is not really in the same class with soft-cover publishing, because the whole distribution method—

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MR. BURGER: It is a distribution method with which I am not entirely familiar, but in the neighborhood where I live there are two *newsstand* outlets for Anchor Books which also feature Dell Books, Bantam Books, Signet Books, etc. Assuming that trade publishing is over here on the right at $4.00, and Anchor Books here in the middle at $.80 or $.90, and over here the reprints and the soft-cover originals at $.25, $.35 and $.50—I would still say that Anchor Books are closer to the soft-covers than to the trade books.

MR. ASHEIM: Again the thing that concerns me is that Anchor Books are reprints. These have been established by hard-cover publishing and identified with an audience. They are now being brought back into print in an inexpensive format because they are already established. They are not experimenting with new writers.

MR. BURGER: Do you think that will never come about, that there is a good argument against it?

MR. HERSEY: It seems to be almost impossible to imagine a Kafka or a Joyce or a Virginia Woolf, to use the examples that Mr. Asheim used, being first sprung at a mass audience. By the very nature of experimental writing, to approach that—

MR. BURGER: In the case of Anchor Books, they are reprints, they are classics, and they are books that every educated person would be drawn to, has read or would want to read, and would want to own. I don't know what their print orders are—do you know?

MR. GUINZBURG: They say they have a 20,000 break-even point.

MR. PITKIN: I think their print orders are in the range of 20,000 to 30,000.

MR. BURGER: That may be; and they may go under, Ballantine Books may go under, all kinds of books may go under. But I still think that paperback publishers are going to have to continue searching for more and better ways to bring a greater variety of books to people who read, whether they put out 30,000 or 300,000 copies. *Discovery* and *New World Writing* are cases in point.

MR. HERSEY: While we are on the economics of books, I've waited a very long time to say something that is not news to either of you gentlemen who are in the paperback field—namely, that authors feel very strongly that their share of profits from paper-backed books is not so great as it ought to be.

I don't know whether you know of the standard royalty arrangement, Mr. Asheim. It is 4 per cent to the author and the original publisher on the first 150,000 copies and 6 per cent thereafter. Those royalties are generally shared equally between original publisher and author, and therefore the author's royalty from the paper-backed books is 2 per cent on the first 150,000 and 3 per cent thereafter.

The royalties on hard-cover books start at 10 per cent and generally go to 15 per cent on a sliding scale. Ballantine Books is paying authors 8 per cent on its paper-backed editions. Authors are quite aware of the differences between the economics of publishing paper-backed books and that of hard-cover publishing. Nevertheless, writers generally feel that the paperback companies can pay a more substantial royalty than they are now paying.

MRS. VAN DOREN: There is one phase of this that hasn't been mentioned at all. We have talked on publishing problems; we have talked about the author's problems; but no one has mentioned the reader and what advantage he may get out of being able to buy a cheaper book.

It is true that he can get a very bad cheap book, but he can also get a very good one; and it seems to me that, on the whole, the advantage to the reader is very significant.

MR. HERSEY: Could I start that off? Although I have been attacking paperback publishing fairly consistently, as a reader I think it is a wonderfully valuable thing.

I started reading paper-backed books in European and English editions before they were very widely published here, and have ever since, whenever I could, bought a paper-back in preference to a hard-cover book.

One of the difficulties again lies in dis-

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tribution, because it is not only hard but sometimes impossible to get the book you want in the paper-backed edition. If you go to a drugstore or to your local outlet for paper-backed books, the chance that the title you want will be there is slight. Mr. Asheim spoke earlier of the perishability of the paper-backed books, because they move through so fast.

Even when you have read an announcement of a recent publication in paper-backed books, it is often very hard to find the book you want. So, from the reader's point of view, there's a kind of chancy nature about the purchase of paper-backed books.

MR. PITKIN: I think that is certainly true. One thing that hasn't been mentioned tonight that is taking place in this country is an increase in the number of outlets—I don't mean to say tens of thousands, but I think probably a few thousand—which are specializing in paper-backed books where you can find not a hundred titles, as you can perhaps in your corner drugstore, but where there are five hundred and even a thousand titles.

I saw such an outlet in Topeka, Kansas, very recently; that one store sold roughly 25 per cent of all the paperbacks sold in the city of Topeka. Well, that made it, I think, one of the big bookstores in the United States in terms of unit sales, though not in terms of dollar sales. There is in many cities today an outlet comparable to that one, and I think there's a trend in that direction.

MR. ASHEIM: I just want to underline what Mr. Hersey said about the difficulty of finding a particular title in a paper-backed edition. I think there are two reasons: one is this problem of distribution. If you look for it immediately after publication, it may not be there; and if you go back three weeks later, it's already gone and won't be replaced.

In addition, the fact that these outlets are manned by people who are not interested in books means that they have no knowledge of the books that they have, no interest in getting the title for you, no way of knowing how to go about it even if they were interested. So, unless you happen by a lucky accident to run upon it yourself, it is a problem. Most readers would not write to the publisher for a book.

MR. PITKIN: That underscores a problem which is being faced by many a paperback publisher, if not by all of them, and that is that the period of sale has been so reduced by the multiplicity of titles that the question today is not whether the production costs can be shaved a tenth of a cent or a hundredth of a cent, but rather whether this or that feature of paperback operations can be modified—whether the paperback industry can exist for the next several years as we know it today in point of volume and range of titles.

MR. GUINZBURG: And, of course, if you reduce your multiplicity of titles, then you have aggravated the very situation that we are worrying about.

MR. PITKIN: Exactly.

MR. GUINZBURG: But I would like to comment on the other point you raised. I am glad it came up, because I think that there has been an enormous amount of exaggeration of the benefit to the reader, as indeed there has been of the benefit to the author. For offhand, it looks as though the existence of the paperback was sheer gain both to author and to reader.

I think that is not at all the case. In the first place, a great deal of paperback publishing is in fact a substitute for the pulp magazine, which has gone down sharply as the paperback has risen. A great deal of the material available in the paperbacks is the same sort of stuff in a different format. The rental library has almost disappeared since the paperback came into existence, which is a loss of distribution to the author and a loss also to readers. Material from the rental library used to be available on a far greater scale than now. But there is also something called the free public library, a place where people could go to get books if they wanted them, offering a far greater choice with none of the disadvantages, or with not as great disadvantage, let us say, of unavailability of title.

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People, as we know, habitually borrow books from each other, which is also an inexpensive way of getting books. Finally, from the point of view of the reader, if there is some gain—as I am perfectly willing to concede—it may be offset by the fact that the hard-cover publisher has to charge the reader a good deal more for all the books that don't go into reprint, all that he doesn't think will go into reprint. If he has to break even somehow just on his own original sale through traditional channels, he may have to charge the customer a couple of dollars extra for a book in order to hope to come out ahead, which is certainly at least an offset to the benefit that the reader may get from inexpensive books.

MR. ASHEIM: Here's another aspect of this problem. It seems to me you hinted at it in a sense. One of the things that many of us believe is that the paperback has created a whole new group of readers—that we have reached many people who did not read before. But it would seem at least possible to me that what we have created is perhaps a whole new group of people who are buying books that don't cost very much; that these are people who were reading anyway; that they got them from the library and in other ways, and if they didn't read them as books, they read them as pulp magazines.

And now these same readers happen to be buying these things which we call books and would seem to represent a whole new audience of book buyers, but they do not necessarily represent a great increase in readers as such.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Do you think it possible that during the war, when we had overseas editions in paper which were distributed to the troops all over the world by the millions, a great many men who had possibly never read anything except maybe a comic book or pulp magazine began to read books? Then after they had come home, when they wanted to read a book—having read nothing but paperbacks before and having no money to spend on hard-bound books—they may have gone out and found paperbacks again.

MR. HERSEY: From the figures we have been given tonight, it seems as if they are losing the hang of it.

MR. GUINZBURG: One of the discouraging things, I think, is that we have practically no evidence that these big distributions do make readers for hard-bound editions of books in general or particular authors.

I think you can check that far more accurately in a case of book club distribution. Take the experience that I think all hard-bound publishers have had: an author who has had an average sale of about 10,000 copies per book; and a major book club is suddenly interested in one of his books and distributes a couple of hundred thousand copies. Then the next book isn't a book club selection, and the author is probably right back where he was before. In other words, those couple of hundred thousand people who may have enjoyed the book that they received from the book club do not take note of the author's next book, do not build up substantial additional sales. I say this unhappily, of course, because one of the hopes that everybody in this business had was that the new methods of distribution would spread reading and form reading habits; and all books would benefit from this. But I have seen in just about thirty years no evidence that this happened.

MR. PITKIN: Isn't it partly a question of who goes to bookstores? After all, when a book club puts out 200,000 copies of the work of any particular author, those books are not distributed with regard to the incidence of bookstores; they would simply go out all over the place, into little cities and rural areas where you have to go fifty miles, sometimes a hundred, to find a bookstore.

MR. ASHEIM: Isn't it true that bookstore sales increase when a book is distributed through the clubs?

MR. PITKIN: That is a different question and has to do in part with the heavy promotion given to the book by the book club and the additional attention that the book receives when it is selected by a club. That

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is a pretty well-known phenomenon.

MR. ASHEIM: The point I was making is that there are people who go into bookstores and buy a book club selection, while there is no apparent carry-over to the author's next book.

MR. GUINZBURG: What happens, I think, when the book is taken by the club is that there is then a lot of talk about that book, and some people actually find their way into a bookstore and buy it.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Gentlemen, I think we must stop this discussion, and I should like in winding it up to ask you each one thing.

It seems to have developed in one way or another from what you have said here this evening that the American people are losing their interest in reading books. Do you think that is so, and if you think it is so, do you think it has any connection with the advent of paperbacks? Let me ask you first, Mr. Pitkin.

MR. PITKIN: I think it is possibly so—that we have to assume that it is so—and that it has nothing to do with the advent of paperbacks, but is associated with phenomena such as the tremendous growth of television and other factors in our culture which affect reading, and particularly the reading of books. And these have to do with the area that I mentioned earlier of anti-intellectualism—let us say with the loneliness of the man who is caught reading a good book.

MRS. VAN DOREN: What do you think, Mr. Asheim?

MR. ASHEIM: I would certainly think that there is no reason to believe that the paperbacked book would cause a decrease in reading books. While I, as you know, have not gone along with the more extravagant claims about the wider audience that is created by the paper-bound book, there is no doubt that it has not reduced the audience, and it certainly has attracted some people who might not otherwise have been reached.

That today there is less interest in reading and that paperbacks abound at the same time is a correlation, but there is no causal factor there at all that can be shown.

MRS. VAN DOREN: But you do think there is less interest in reading?

MR. ASHEIM: I would fear that is so.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Guinzburg, how about you?

MR. GUINZBURG: I would agree with Mr. Asheim that the paperback isn't in any sense a cause of any decline. I think the paperback is an expression in the book field of what is happening generally in turning the arts of communication into a mass medium rather than a rather relatively selected medium. Serious reading has relatively declined in terms of what we should have expected from the increasingly educated American public. It seems to me that this is all part of a very broad pattern in which there are common factors to be found in the newspaper world, in the magazine world, movies, radio and television—that we are just part of that large pattern.

MRS. VAN DOREN: And you, Mr. Burger?

MR. BURGER: I think that the reading of books has increased tremendously. I think it is largely attributable to the widespread distribution of soft-cover editions of books.

MRS. VAN DOREN: You are optimistic on both scores?

MR. BURGER: Yes, I am, and I regret that the Gallup figures have declined from 1947 to 1953 from 22 to 17 per cent. I think 17 per cent for America in 1954 is a very good figure and quite respectable. And I think that with books printed in the millions—be they partly pulp, partly magazine writing reoriented into a new format, be they serious works of fiction or not—a great many more people are reading books now than they were on any long-term scale going back fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty years ago—a higher proportion of people.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Hersey what do you feel about this?

MR. HERSEY: Television.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Not so many are reading?

MR. HERSEY: I think not.

MRS. VAN DOREN: And it's not paperbacks, but television?

MR. HERSEY: I think it's harder to teach

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reading now. Children see images, not words, and I think there is less reading, less buying of books for that reason. I don't think paperbacks have anything to do with the decline.

MR. PITKIN: I would just like to break in at this point if I might. You asked earlier, Mrs. Van Doren, what was thought about the man who was in service and was introduced to books in paper format, and whether he didn't come out of the Army or the Navy, whatever service, a book reader, having gone in with no background in this field at all. I think that that happened to a great many people who were in service. However, the age of that group of people must be considered: by this time they have taken on families and business, and have such financial responsibilities that they have become, let us say, less important in the book market, and are buying fewer books than they did five years ago.

This is something which apparently happens to people whether they are educated or not. As they take on more and more responsibilities, they read less and less. They may read more selectively and they may read better books, but in the aggregate, so far as I can make out, their total reading tends to decline as they take on family responsibilities.

So, if you take this along with the advent of television and the other factors that have been discussed, I think you might have something that would go far to explain some of the tendencies that have been pointed to here.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Who wants the last word?

MR. ASHEIM: If all these factors militate against reading, it seems to me that Mr. Burger might properly have asked how much less reading there might have been if the paperbacks weren't around.

MR. PITKIN: A fair question.

MRS. VAN DOREN: Any other comments?

Well, thank you all very much; we will look forward to seeing this in type.

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..... *Under Whatever Sky* .....

IRWIN EDMAN

Take a Number

Everybody loves anniversaries, and the more grandiose the number of years celebrated, the better. Only the other day, it seems, Paris was having a festival to mark its somehow-determined two-thousandth anniversary. A little before that, Hitler was celebrating the first year of an empire that was to last a thousand.

People settle for smaller units of time as occasions for jubilation and ceremony. My native city, New York, has just been marking its three-hundredth anniversary as an incorporated city. My native university, Columbia, is embarking on a year-long observation of its bicentennial.

The anniversaries that have perhaps the most wistful appeal are those of institutions, modest in point of years, which celebrate the fact that they have survived at all and publish to the world the tremulously confident hope that they will continue to do so, for a while yet anyway. There is the little review that has a grand festival number marking its fifth or possibly its first anniversary. There is the little theater group, barely at the close of its initial year, that inaugurates a celebration season. There is the struggling young college, built by local pride, that at the end of five years dresses up the occasion no less ardently than if its continuity went back to Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum—as perhaps it might be argued it does. The precariously financed review, the struggling theater group, the fiscally uncertain college, by thus celebrating are at once saying, "See how far we have come in how short a time," and "Don't look now, but we are surviving," or perhaps, in an undertone, "—if you will all help us."

All celebrants are either one with the Pilgrim Fathers at the end of their first arduous year, or one with Queen Victoria's contented subjects at her Jubilee looking back on fifty years of comfortable grandeur, looking forward—how probable it then seemed—to a thousand more.

But celebrations have a deeper resonance when the institution thus blazoned forth has sustenance of a long memory and a deeply rooted tradition. "Freshmen are not allowed to sit here," is supposed to have been inscribed on a certain bench in a certain quite new state university, and underneath, "Beginning next year this will be a tradition." It is nice to have background to look back to instead of to hope for. How convenient it would be if the human race could make up its mind just when it began, just when, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, mankind could have regarded itself as in the first year of humanity. Two hundred thousand years is the period sometimes agreed upon. Perhaps in the midst even of a cold war, humanity as a whole could be roused to celebrate the two-hundred-thousandth anniversary of the human race, a festival for all mankind, a world-wide exposition of the best that man has accomplished and, even now, a hope for his survival and a faith that the first two hundred thousand years are the hardest.

Quest for Uncertainty

A pessimist these days may be cynically defined as one who believes the future is settled, or even that there will be one. John Dewey once wrote a book entitled *The Quest for Certainty*, in which he argued that the history of philosophy was in no small part the mistaken quest for an absolute. But the history of contemporary

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thought could well be written as the search for the conditional, the tentative, an escape clause, a way out. Today it is not uncertainty we fear so much as inevitability. Anxiety about insecurity? Not, in the slang current at the turn of century, on your tintype.

Concern now is over the unalterably fated, the ominously in-the-cards. If we have escaped Marxism with its dreary theory of dialectical inevitability in the unfolding of history, we find ourselves under the whip of some metaphysical Unconditioned. Or worse than any Absolute, we find among the Existentialists the inescapable Absurd.

Even without benefit of high metaphysical speculation, we are burdened with doctrines or, if not doctrines, the moods of inevitability. The next war is unavoidable, or destruction through the hydrogen bomb. The fate is fixed by our chromosomes or by our now damning childhood. Our very views are fixed by the pattern of the culture in which we live. In America, the reputed land of freedom, we are fated, we now learn, to be lonely in a crowd. By 1984, we shall all be pulled and pushed about by the automatism of the monolithic state.

The Quest for Certainty? A little margin of error, a daring slight possibility that it is all a mistake, a glimmer of suggestion that we may start over, that "it ain't necessarily so," a fresh breeze of contingency, and how much better we shall all be feeling!

Hi-Fi

A new phrase has come into the language and has already become, for affection and convenience, shortened. High-fidelity, we are assured, has become a mass mania, and the phrase *hi-fi* is epidemic in conversation and in the newspapers. The country is filled with amateurs seeking the best components for hi-fi systems—the best audio, the best magnet, the best speaker, and the best God knows what, which the nonaddict can neither pronounce nor understand.

Part of the interest in high-fidelity phonograph reproduction is the familiar American interest in gadgets. But part of it is something deeper. It is the apparently growing passion for genuine fidelity in musical reproduction, the desire to hear music over one's own speaker in one's own living room as nearly as possible as one hears it in the concert hall—the oboe with its edged sweetness (that ill wind which nobody blows good), the broad sweep of the lower notes on the cello, the massed attack of strings, and, through the miracle of the coaxial speaker, the sense of the whole air being filled with music, of our whole consciousness being surrounded by it.

Occasionally an acoustical expert reminds the devotee that beyond a certain point fidelity becomes so high that the ordinary ear of the ordinary listener cannot really perceive all the fidelity there is. But the passion remains unchecked. For the desire is not, one suspects, for something simply acoustically faithful. It is one instance of a more generalized and touching concern, for fidelity *überhaupt*, for, as the phrase now runs, "over-all" authenticity. Hi-fi is another name for the quest for certainty, for the search for the absolute, for the pursuit of truth. Perhaps in thinking, it is as with the human ear; beyond a certain range, truth too would be, in every sense, beyond the human ken. But the hunger persists and is content somehow to be nourished by illusion. Many a philosophy has had the sheen and clarity of hi-fi; it has sounded as if it were the voice of truth. This, it has seemed to say, is Reality speaking. And the world, or a certain proportion of it, for a certain length of time has listened as intently as if it were really overhearing, thanks to the most expert gadgeteers using the most modern components, the subtlest overtones of the Absolute.

Easy Does It

In writing to foreigners, one is torn between bewailing the hysterical climate of political opinion in this country and assuring them that they must not take it quite so seriously. One reminds them that there have been Know-Nothing movements before this in American history, and that many things, and not only in America, are

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said in political maneuvering that are not meant to be taken at their face value or ever actually put into practice, promises never intended to be kept. One reminds foreigners that there is too much humorous good sense in the American people for them ever to be completely or long taken in by a demagogue, too much independence to be subservient to a dictator.

Yet in one's heart one is uneasy. The fund of humorous good sense does not last forever, and a country which has a sense of fun has not been without its fanaticisms; and conformity is growing among us. Perhaps, to borrow the title of S. N. Behrman's play of twenty years ago, this is "no time for comedy," or for casual playfulness, or for simple or amused disdain. John Dewey, in one of his few aphorisms, said, "While the saint sits in his Ivory Tower, the burly sinners rule the world." Well, while the humorist smiles at the spectacle, the spectacle itself may become less and less something to smile at.

One tries another gambit. Perhaps it is a time to be serious, but *not* to be solemn. All is lost if one becomes as rigid as the fanatics whom one deplores and detests. Casualness does not befit a world-wide crisis. But a tense solemnity has never by itself solved a problem. Easy doesn't quite do it, but it helps. There is nothing the demagogue wants more than for us to take him with literalness. How devastating it would be to any fanaticism if the mere mention of it should evoke universal laughter.

The New Villainy

The Veterans of Foreign Wars in the sovereign state of New Jersey, it was recently announced in the papers, had discovered that schoolchildren were being taught a pledge to grow up to be citizens of the world. A very respectable character named Cleanthes wrote a hymn long ago to the City of Zeus. The Stoic philosophers in general dreamed of a world community and thought, like Paul, that all men were members one of another. Some of the wisest and most generous of all mankind have dreamed of a time when the human race should be one. So unsubversive a character as Tennyson spoke, in "Locksley Hall," of the vision of "the parliament of man, the federation of the world." It entered nobody's head that he was undermining the Parliament of Britain or sapping the supports of the British Empire.

But times clearly and sadly have changed. A small child displaying an innocent ambition to grow up to be a citizen of the world is now suspect of political original sin or of being, at the very least, the victim of dark and sinister forces seeking to overthrow the American state. How silly, one is tempted to ask, can one get? Frankly, though, one hesitates in this era to put any conceivable limits to absurdity. It is not, perhaps, impossible to go further still than to declare something subversive about the idea of world citizenship. It is not incredible that the Veterans of Foreign Wars may go further still. For clearly, foreigners are the cause of wars. Without foreigners there would be no wars. And what is clearly wrong with foreigners is that they *are* foreign, and thus not clearly human; or perhaps they are merely human, not, like ourselves, something special and extra-human. "I pledge myself," one may be hearing children taught to say, "to resign from the human race, which except in the forty-eight states is only by diplomatic courtesy entitled to be called human." "I pledge myself," one may be hearing a little while from now, now that space ships are in the offing, "to resign from the solar system." Or eventually even, "I pledge myself not to recognize that there are other planets, or even other countries. I pledge myself to the only land in which people exist, my own, my native land."

The Age of Labels

Our age has been called the age of this and the age of that. Just the other year, W. H. Auden was calling it "the Age of Anxiety." Just the other week, James A. Wechsler, in his admirable political and spiritual autobiography, called it "the Age of Suspicion." And no one is likely to quarrel with either of the terms; nearly everybody is anxious and nearly everyone else is suspicious. If one is to settle for a brace of

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epithets for our time, either of these currently epidemic words will do.

One would give something to know what a judicious or imaginative historian of, say, a hundred years from now will call the current segment of history. "The Age of Self-Consciousness" might do. Surely there can have been no age that was so universally talked about or in which individuals talked so self-absorbedly about the nature of their own natures. But perhaps "the Age of Labeling" would do best of all. This is the period, the historian will observe, when everybody described everyone else as an introvert, when every neurotic recognized neurosis in his friends, when everyone thought everyone else was a latent "this" or a suppressed "that," when the intellectuals were dubbed eggheads by the middlebrows who were thus dubbed by the intellectuals, when everything to the left of Louis XVI was called communist by fascists, and where everything right of socialism was identified by others as fascist. This is the period, the historian will note, in which the simplest social facts had to be dressed up in the fanciest labels; society itself became a fancy-dress ball of categories.

Fiction Is Stranger Than Truth

The winter has been enlivened with at least two major hoaxes, one literary and one anthropological. The enkindling account of the fortitude of a Canadian who was in secret intelligence work in France during the Occupation turned out to be a tall tale invented to edify church groups and to serve as a lesson in courage fortified by faith. The Piltdown man turned out too, such of him as was not faked, to have been fifty thousand years old instead of five hundred thousand. Some unknown practical joker, if he were still alive, would have the laugh on the learned world, just as a few years ago the Dutch forger who had fooled the experts and had made everybody believe in his own homemade Vermeers laughed bitterly at his dupes who caught up with him.

These hoaxes in literature, in art, in science have a long history; and the motive for perpetrating them is sometimes the desire for gain or celebrity or amusement or revenge. There is a wry satisfaction in reading about the exposé of one of these frauds, and the sometimes smug conviction that one had suspected it all along. But there is a curious ambiguity, come to think of it, about the idea of fraud in literature. The Canadian invention about spy experiences in France turned out to be a fiction. But fiction is fiction, too, only for the time being it is a highly successful hoax. Coleridge grandly says that poetry requires a poetic suspension of disbelief. But the engrossing poet and the convincing novelist induce not a cessation of doubt, but the assent of all the feeling tone of belief. What else is all art but the creation of a world that is for the time being quite as credible, perhaps more so, than the world of diurnal events?

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..... The Revolving Bookstand .....

The Eye and the Mind

THE VOICES OF SILENCE: Man and His Art. By André Malraux. *New York: Doubleday and Company. 661 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by MORRIS WEITZ

This is one of the great books on the history and philosophy of the arts. Concerned as it is with the plastic arts, it succeeds in destroying many vast clichés about both historical understanding of art and its place in the domain of Man. As history, it dismisses the orthodox classification of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Chinese, Medieval, Renaissance, et cetera, up to Modern; and it substitutes for this a new, brilliantly conceived set of categories: "Museum Without Walls," "The Metamorphoses of Apollo," "The Creative Process," and "The Aftermath of the Absolute," with which Malraux illumines all the great periods of art, individual artists, even particular works, as well as some haunting metaphysical problems in the nature of creation.

The photograph and its attendant art of reproduction have helped to institute a new kind of museum, the first real anthology of the arts. They have forced the formulating of a new conception of the development of the arts. From the first to the last page, Malraux retells the story of this development: an adventure through his museum without walls, where incisive, impassioned text is juxtaposed to equally revealing photographs. Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Buddhist, Chinese, Medieval, Italian, French, Northern, Modern, Savage, Insane, Children's, and Folk art are all treated with unorthodox brilliance. One example, I think, will suffice to illustrate his technique of treatment. On page 325, there is a detail from Michelangelo's "The Last Judgment," about which Malraux writes:

> In the Florentine "Christs" that Michelangelo had carved before this, there had not been a hint of that strange colossal figure whose maledictory gesture consigns to the outer darkness those wretched sinners wrested from the brief darkness of the tomb. When in one of his last works . . . Fra Angelico had portrayed that gesture, it was still charged with benediction and seemed to be directed towards the attendant angels. Its transformation is one of the most significant transformations in the whole history of art. . . . [Michelangelo's] all-conquering Messiah was not born in a stable, was never mocked and buffeted, succored no travelers on the Way to Emmaus, nor was He crucified between two thieves. Remote indeed is that divine humility which He shared with the saints who now escort Him, like a terrified bodyguard!

In literally hundreds of analyses of this sort, Malraux turns the full force of his basic categories onto the work of art itself in order to effect an illumination for the "spectator" of his museum without walls. Indeed, however much one may disagree with his major metaphysical points about art, there can be no doubt that what he says about vast amounts of individual works of art adds up to the most cogently *aesthetic* criticism we have yet been given in a history of art. These concrete aesthetic essays on particular works of art alone make this whole book worth living with for a long, long time.

But, in my opinion, what is supremely important and what prompted the high regard for it when it first appeared as the three-volume *Psychology of Art* (of which the *Voices* is a slightly revised version) are the philosophical things Malraux says about the arts. Art, he says, is no imita-

MORRIS WEITZ, associate professor of philosophy at Vassar College, is the author of *Philosophy of the Arts* and a number of articles on the arts. He is presently engaged on a work in the philosophy of criticism.

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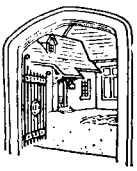

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tion of nature, but a transformation of it, in which the artist creates his own world. In his third section on "The Creative Process," Malraux argues that the truly great artist has always started his creative life work not from any study of nature but from other art. From imitation of other art, the young genius goes on to the pastiche and eventually revolts against all that has gone before him. Cézanne, Malraux writes, did not return to his beloved mountain to realize it better but to realize his picture better. Every genius in our tradition, he says, fulfilled himself only through this initial destruction of other art. It is his psychological crucible in which he forges his own style. And it is style, Malraux claims, which is of the essence of great art.

Art, Malraux says, is the revolt against man's fate, an age-long dialogue with destiny. Each of the great styles and movements in the history of art has conceived this revolt differently, and the diverse conceptions constitute the great styles. It is here that we must begin in our imaginary museum, and not with "masterpieces." "Every true style is the scaling-down to our human perspective of that eternal flux on whose mysterious rhythms we are borne ineluctably, in a never-ceasing drift of stars." It is the artist, but especially the genius, who meets our human destiny head-on and challenges it by creating his own universe of which he is the master. The Greek, the Byzantine, the Buddhist, the Romanesque, et cetera, up to the Modern artists have all succeeded in their revolt against destiny and other artists' revolts only by creating a different style, a "new transformation of the meaning of the world." Style is an interpretation, through the plastic materials of the artist, of the reality within the world of appearances, whether it be the Eternity of the Byzantine, the Serenity of the Chinese, or the Drama of Christianity personalized in Christ. Style, genius and nature meet when the artist in revolt conceives a new art which does not yet exist and goes to nature for suggestions of forms. (As Maritain has put it in his new book on art, the artist steals from, he doesn't copy nature.)

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Malraux's emphasis upon the importance of art as against experience or nature in the creative process, his insight into style as a precise conception of the universe, his notion of a masterpiece as the most personal expression of a style, and his nonrhapsodical analysis of the nature of artistic genius all strike me as first-rate philosophical contributions. In a tradition in which these concepts of style, genius, creation and destiny have been given wholly unintelligible treatment by writers of one sort or another, it is an intellectual joy to watch Malraux pin down these concepts to concrete examples in the arts themselves. And with what French devastation he exposes the lingering clichés about understanding art: e.g., that we must read the autobiographies and writings of artists, or that we must bring sociological science to bear on art. We need bring nothing to our new museum, Malraux insists, except an eye with which to see and a mind with which to understand what is in the *work of art itself*, for this is where the artist has come alive.

A Bleak and Powerful Bestiary

THE MARMOT DRIVE. By John Hersey. *New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 273 pp. $3.50.*

Reviewed by HIRAM HAYDN

This potent allegory relates the story of a two-day drive by the inhabitants of Tunxis, Connecticut, to exterminate the marmots, or woodchucks, of the vicinity, who have grown so bold as to walk right down a town sidewalk, and so numerous as to seem to some of the villagers to threaten their ownership of Tunxis.

From the very beginning of the drive, there is apparent a pervasive ambiguity as to the relative degree of animality in hunted and hunter. Anak Welch, a prominent townsman, says, "What we forget is that we are still part of the woodlot where it grows rank and wild." A visiting young woman from New York named Hester wonders if the Selectman, leader of the drive, half saint and half sardonic cynic, "saw evil in the beasts but not in himself—or the other way round. . . ." There is a moment in the drive when Eben, the Selectman's son, and a marmot confront each other: "Both figures were ambiguously posed—either menacing or craven, it was hard to see which; or both were both at once, maybe. . . ." Hester associates the sunbathing of a marmot, which she observes, with the undertow in herself that makes her never so content as when lying on a beach under the sun, drained of all thought and of all feeling except the sensation of the immediate physical situation. And there are countless other incidents or exchanges that make it evident that Mr. Hersey's title refers to more than the literal pursuit of the four-legged animals.

Whatever the other villagers think of the purpose of the marmot drive, the Selectman is clearly bent upon exorcising the compulsive animal drives within human beings. "The only specific for evil-poisoning," he remarks in another context, "is evil." It is ironic indeed that it is only at the very end of the book—when the drive ends in a climax of sadism, brutality and general disintegration—that he seems fully to realize in actuality what he has stated several times theoretically. Early in the drive he has been sure that they have flushed as many as four hundred woodchucks; and the final yield is very small. What, he wonders during a moment of reflection, can have become of all those others? A "wild surmise" that the author never develops explicitly flickers across his and the reader's mind.

Whatever may be the specific political applications of what Mr. Hersey is saying in his fable, this is as savagely pessimistic a reckoning of what has become of the American heritage of liberty, good will and human aspiration as has been written in our time. The past of Tunxis possesses dignity; this is evident in the reminiscences of its oldest citizen, in the early memories of the Selectman, in the town's historic landmarks. The epitaph of the Selectman's father was, "His head was in the clouds;

✪ HIRAM HAYDN is the editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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his feet were on the ground." In the Selectman himself both these attitudes are apparent, but a split, a schism, has taken place so that it seems he can exercise only one at a time. His idealism lacks any solid basis in reality (he is defining his own nature, although speaking of "Yankees" in general, when he refers to "an idealist even after he has come to see how hopeless life is"). His realism, bereft of true purpose and vision, has become a grim and sardonic naturalism: he reminds his truly idealistic son, who is citing the Commandments to him, of all the less savory parts of the Bible that he can remember.

Yet, despite this duality, this fatal rift in his personality, the Selectman towers above his neighbors. Indeed, not since Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* has there been a collection of characters who are so consistently described in terms of animals and animal characteristics. They speak a rough, crabbed language halfway between exaggerated Yankee talk and the grunts and sighs and snorts of beasts.

If these people do indeed represent Mr. Hersey's sad view of human nature—and in particular of human nature today in the United States—what is the explanation? Surely in part we must return to the words of Anak Welch about "the woodlot where it grows rank and wild." The Selectman's father did not, to be sure, reject the animal heritage of the human condition, but he harnessed it to those values which have most traditionally been what we mean when we refer proudly to being human. Our defection, Mr. Hersey seems to be saying, has been twofold: to forget these values and to forget the dangers in our animal heritage. Hence we have come to live (or at least the citizens of Tunxis have) in a little jungle of fear and hate and lust.

To hate, these characters demonstrate again and again, is almost surely to become that which one hates. To fear is to come close to insuring the eventuality of what one fears. And to experience evil or guilt within oneself usually engenders a screaming necessity to discover, pursue, persecute it outside oneself. Only love can lift one above those compulsive animal drives of fear and hatred and sloth and lust that make the grotesques of the marmot drive jiggle through their dance of living death. And the House of Love, as the Selectman explains, is simply abandoned: what has happened to people, he points out painfully, is "a part of the breakdown of ordinary everyday love that we see all around us." It is significant that the only intensively presented symbol of love in the book is found by one of the few characters still groping toward decency and sensitiveness and generosity—found where? Within the body of death—the skeleton of a marmot. The little parable of Auntie Dorcas, on the other hand, illustrates the whole cycle of fear and hate and redeeming love.

Bereft of those attributes we most happily think of as human, unable to bear what they sense inside themselves, the people of Tunxis speak truth about themselves unwittingly whenever they claim to be describing someone or something else. Let one of them call another stubborn, for example, and you can be fairly sure that you have a just estimate of the speaker. And indeed, possessing no principles *believed in* and *lived*, they all resort to dogmatism of one kind or another; whatever they proclaim as conviction is likely to be the opposite of the truth within them. Only young Eben has in any degree that "humble flexibility" and decent uncertainty that make "lonely courage" possible—and he is sorely tried by the events of these two nightmarish days.

Mr. Hersey's bleak and powerful bestiary has met with a strange reception. To be sure, it is much too packed (every anecdote, every incident, every reference holds or may hold symbolic or thematic content) for casual digestion. Yet, the confession on the part of most of the book's reviewers of complete failure to comprehend its substance, is difficult to understand. One would like to find the downright abuse of a small number of other reviewers equally difficult to understand. The affirmative idealist of *The Wall* has become the disillusioned idealist of *The Marmot Drive*—surely no reason for a genuinely disinterested reviewer to advocate corporal punishment

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for the author, as has at least one. Perhaps indeed that review and any others like it are melancholy but solid evidence of at least the partial validity of Mr. Hersey's painful theme. Perhaps it would be salutary for such to try again to understand the cause of the Selectman's "awful sting of recognition" at the end of the book, to try again to fathom his "awful, incipient comprehension."

The Marmot Drive is a deeply somber book—but no more so than *Gulliver's Travels*. It is difficult, demanding of the reader—but not much more so than some famous allegories of the past, had one not so many scholars and interpreters to help one with them. And it is this reviewer's profound conviction that *The Marmot Drive* is one of the few books of this decade with which we must reckon long after the end of the decade.

The Creative Person and the Creative Process

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD. Volume I: The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries, 1856-1900. By Ernest Jones, M.D. Illustrated. *New York: Basic Books, Inc. 488 pp. $6.75.*

Reviewed by NORMAN KELMAN, M.D.

Whatever the verdict of the years to come and the increasing work being done in the art and science of psychoanalysis regarding Freudian theory, Sigmund Freud will stand as a pioneer. This alone warrants him a place among those who have expressed the finest potential of Man.

Born three years before the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Freud in his lifetime charted a course which has led us to the study of Man's most distinctive characteristic—mind and soul. Others—philosophers, psychologists, physicians, saints—preceded him in their recognition of dimensions of humanness beyond the obvious. But Freud was the first to attempt a systematic investigation and explanatory theory of Man's psyche, and to develop a therapeutic method based on these findings. His genius was not that he built a bridge between one scientific discipline and another. His was a courageous and intellectually keen thrust deep into himself and into the Unknown.

Students of psychoanalysis and of other fields of study in human relations can be grateful to Ernest Jones for his scholarly presentation of the first forty-four years of Freud's eighty-three years of life. In this first volume of what will be a three-volume work, we have material which is at once illuminating for an understanding of Freud's theories and also a call for humility before the creative person and the creative process.

But it is wryly paradoxical that Freud, who opened the doors to life for so many, should himself fare so badly in one sense at the hands of his biographer. André Maurois has said that the writing of biography is a fusion of fact, wisdom and art, and that "the aim of the biographer is to make the man and his time come alive again." Unfortunately, Dr. Jones must rank here as a recorder of facts, although his record is a full, rich, scholarly one. Only occasionally does Freud himself come alive, and then only when he speaks in his own words through his letters. The immediate medical atmosphere and the state of psychiatric and neurological knowledge of the times come through more vividly. And this in itself is of great value to the student who too often feels, despite the record, that psychiatry and medicine begin and end with his own era. We get some feeling for the immensity of the ignorance which suffused the therapy of the mentally ill. We see some picture of the impact of politics and professional jealousy on medical science and art. And Dr. Jones presents us with a thorough development of Freud's *thinking* as he progressed from anatomist and microscopist, through his researches in neurology, into therapy of hysteria and the other neurotic syndromes. This is further

✪ Norman Kelman, training analyst and lecturer of the American Institute for Psychoanalysis and lecturer of the New School for Social Research, is the author of numerous articles in the field of psychoanalysis and child development.

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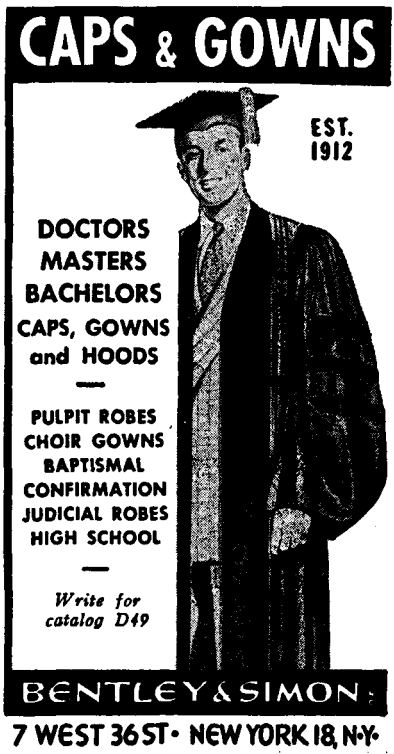

enriched by ample reference, careful footnoting and a detailed bibliography.

There are perhaps many reasons for Freud's not emerging clearly as the person he was; and, to be sure, this is not due to his being a specter. This lack of aliveness is missed especially in a biography of such a person because so much of his original work stemmed from his own self-analysis as well as from his clinical activities.

Some of these reasons may be due to one of the motives in Jones's desire to write his work, namely, "that ill-natured people were already at work distorting isolated passages [of Freud's autobiography] with the object of disparaging his character, and this could be rectified only by a still fuller exposition of his inner and outer life." Apparently, the need to combat a supposed growing personal attack on Freud made necessary a spirit of historical accuracy, almost a legal briefing, rather than an artistic fusing of the data and spirit of Freud. But it would have been better for Freud to "come alive" to stand for himself. Out of this would come the richness to amplify his work; and his personal detractors, if that they be, would in the process be disavowed. But in this, Jones has failed.

Another factor which probably contributes to the flatness of this book, and for this we have to hold Dr. Jones responsible, is the misguided notion that despair is a human frailty from which Freud did not suffer. In several places the comment is made that Freud was "never in despair." But in his letters, especially to Fliess, Freud says in his own words that he was often in despair. Moreover, this is one of the aspects of Freud's greatness—that he could despair, that he not merely indulged in self-pity but truly felt his loneliness and his suffering. This is part of the creative process. As Claude Bernard has said, "Those who do not know the torment of the unknown cannot have the joy of discovery." Freud knew both, and Dr. Jones does not do him justice when he minimizes that struggle.

At another point his biographer says that Freud was never attracted by the apparently unknowable, and seems to feel

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this laudable. But it was precisely because Freud was so attracted that he succeeded in enlarging the area of the known and gave us the tools to reduce the area of the "unknowable."

If these comments about Dr. Jones as a biographer lessen the eagerness of potential readers of this book, it would be a loss for them. For there is, in the wealth of documentation, especially through the correspondence between Freud and Martha Bernays in the four years of their courtship, and in the remnants of the Fliess correspondence, wonderful material for the creative reader himself to breathe life into Freud. Incidentally, in this latter correspondence (which Freud probably would have wished erased), there is a chapter suggesting a truly creative relationship of a disciplined man (Freud) and a fabulously imaginative man (Fliess). It is most likely that this relationship was crucial in encouraging Freud to move ahead more imaginatively and intensively with his hard-won clinical observations and to his own self-analysis.

It is in Freud's words that one finds his aliveness: he was a lonely man, a Jew and an alien in the Vienna that was for him more anti-Semitic than gay. He was a proud and poor man—beholden to friends who helped him financially, yet unable in this period to maintain for long a deep relationship. He was a stranger to himself, yet not a stranger to deep hates and angers which flared up against former friends. He was capable of intense passion and warm tenderness. His letters to Martha Bernays, of love, of his embracing the beauty of Italy and his other travels, are a tribute to this. He was a man of great integrity and courage, as his tenacity in the face not only of hostile professional criticism, but of his own inner doubts, demonstrates. When he discovered that his crediting of patients' reports of infantile sexual attacks had led him to a false theory, he was shaken—yes, in despair. But then he could boldly thrust further to the significant recognition of fantasies in neurosis.

He was not without humor, and once, when his friend Fliess "accused" him of being left-handed, Freud jocularly replied that "so far as he could remember in his childhood he had two left hands, but the one on the right side had always the preference."

Freud was an ambitious man, not for material things, but for knowledge and the instruments to acquire it. In these years he expected and feared an early death, which gave impetus to his tremendous productivity. And the very expansiveness of his ambitions added to his fear that his life would be cut short. In his own words, as written to Fliess, is an important clue to his genius: "You often estimate me too highly. For I am not really a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a conquistador—an adventurer, if you want to translate the word—with the curiosity, the boldness, and the tenacity that belongs to that type of being. . . ." Freud was all this, including that which he said he was not. Little wonder then at his anxiety, his possessiveness, his pride and his despair. But we today must be grateful that in this variety and turmoil was a constructiveness which made for growth rather than stagnation.

This is some of Freud, and there is much more to be gained for the imaginative reader. One could wish Jones had done better for us in this respect. For in Freud we have such an opportunity, in his extensive writings, his correspondence, in the fact that many of his contemporaries, including Dr. Jones, still live. It would be too bad if motives genuinely intended for good were hampered by a misguided notion that he need be defended against derogators, or if the movement which his work inspired felt it could not tolerate the "live" Freud.

Strange New World

THE JOURNALS OF LEWIS AND CLARK. Edited by Bernard DeVoto. Maps by Erwin Raisz. *Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. lii, 504 pp. $6.50.*

Reviewed by HENRY NASH SMITH

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his *The Course of Empire*, which traced the long course of geographical discovery in the American West to its climax in 1805 when Lewis and Clark came down the Columbia to the Pacific. The journals of this expedition are indeed, as Mr. DeVoto says, "by far the most interesting as well as the most important original narrative of North American exploration." But they have been virtually inaccessible to the general reader. Although the urbane semi-official narrative of the expedition prepared by Nicholas Biddle was reprinted several times during the nineteenth century, the only previous edition of the original journals is that of Reuben Gold Thwaites, published in eight volumes in 1904-1905, and now out of print. Because Thwaites properly considered himself obliged to print every scrap of manuscript he had access to, his edition is a repository of historical source material rather than a coherent narrative.

Mr. DeVoto has skillfully put together a continuous account of the expedition, embodying the essential parts of the original journals but omitting more than half the total bulk of the surviving manuscript material—repetitious entries (where the two commanders kept parallel records for the same days), routine meteorological data, technical descriptions of plants and animals, and so on. He has added occasional passages from the journals of other members of the party, and by means of brief transitional and explanatory notes has made the sometimes cryptic documents fully accessible to the reader. He is especially helpful in working out the geography of a route traversing vast stretches of territory that no white man had ever seen before, where even the major rivers and mountain ranges appeared on no maps and bore only local Indian names. He has not only mastered the considerable scholarship on this subject, but he has been over the ground himself, and he knows what he is talking about. Further help with the geography is provided by six maps in the text and an endpaper map covering the entire area traversed by the party.

But the expedition involved much more than geographical investigaton. In his brilliant forty-page introduction, the editor makes it clear that as these weary men hauled their dugouts up the rapids of mountain streams or bartered with remote Indian tribes for food and horses, they were the focus of a complex pattern of forces involving Europe as well as America. Their most obvious function was to further Thomas Jefferson's efforts to keep from British hands the enormous territory between the Mississippi and the Pacific that Napoleon could not hold for France. Almost as obviously, they were pioneers of American settlement of the Far West. At the same time, they were diplomatic agents of the federal government in its relations with hitherto unknown Indian tribes; they were instructed to find out what the Canadian fur companies were up to in the northern Rockies and beyond; and they were supposed to survey a route along which the China trade could pour its wealth into the United States.

The journals make vivid reading, however, entirely apart from their historical significance. The actual entries set down nightly by the campfire, with their impressionistic spelling, their mixture of blunt vernacular with occasional flights of rhetoric, the first-hand reporting of how it felt to be in an absolute wilderness with no food in sight beyond a handful of dried fish, have an immediacy that no contrivance of artistic technique could equal. What is recorded here is not only the strange new world of the Far West, but the ways of thinking and feeling and acting which the members of the party brought with them—from Virginia, from Kentucky, from the French-Canadian settlements along the Mississippi. It is as interesting to learn that in their infrequent leisure hours the enlisted men played at prisoners' base or danced for the entertainment of the Mandans as it is to read about the dress and tribal mores of the Nez Percés. And it is also fascinating to observe the discipline

✪ HENRY NASH SMITH, professor of English at the University of California, is the author of *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth.*

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of the wilderness bringing out the essential qualities of men—Drouillard's skill as a hunter and his quick mastery of the Indian sign language; the unbreakable solidarity of the party after two years of constant companionship; most of all, perhaps, the personal traits of the two captains, so different in temperament, yet equally endowed with the innate gift of command, especially in moments of emergency like the surprise attack of the Sioux upon Lewis and his detachment near Maria's River on the return journey. Mr. DeVoto has arranged his version to preserve this rich texture, and in consequence has produced a work of historical importance that has an almost irresistible appeal to the imagination.

Minutiae and Unrefined Ore

THE SECRET DIARY OF HAROLD L. ICKES: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936. *New York: Simon and Schuster. 738 pp. $6.00.*

Reviewed by ASHER LANS

The "Return to Normalcy" of the Republican party during the decade of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover never brought the complete internment of the GOP's liberal wing. With typical intransigence, a group of senators from the trans-Mississippi states, mostly survivors of the Bull Moose movement, broke party ranks in 1932 and supported Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first Presidential campaign. The victorious Roosevelt sought to develop a permanent alliance between the Democratic party and these dissentient Republicans by placing some of their leaders in the Cabinet. Declinations of office by Senators Hiram Johnson and Bronson Cutting resulted in the comparatively unknown Harold Ickes becoming Secretary of the Interior.

In 1933, Ickes was in his fifty-ninth year, a veteran of innumerable unsuccessful reform movements, an experienced opponent of the corrupt political machines of Illinois. On past performance he was destined for a short tenure of office. Although remaining a maverick, Ickes unexpectedly became the only person other than Frances Perkins who was to serve in the Roosevelt Cabinet from its first to its last day. He expanded the functions of the Department of Interior, became Public Works Administrator, and, as sidelines, secured control of the administration's oil, coal, and housing programs.

Throughout his service in Washington, Ickes kept elaborate digests of his work and meetings, which he weekly converted into a diary. The present volume is an abbreviated version of this journal for the period between FDR's inauguration on March 4, 1933, and the end of 1936. The publishers state that some portions of the original text have been altered or changed in context. The few editorial comments are unobtrusive and helpful.

The secretly kept diary maintains the reputation for outspokenness which gave its author the proud sobriquet of the "Old Curmudgeon." It gives frank and contemporaneous descriptions of Cabinet and White House meetings, and of political activities. The diary gives names, exact dates, detailed paraphrases of conversations.

One of the book's most revealing sections is its evocation of the atmosphere of 1933 and of the frightened demands of the business community for control from Washington. Ickes records the pleas of mining and petroleum barons for federal succor. His opening entries describe "Great and mighty men crawling to Washington on their hands and knees these days to get the government to run their business for them." FDR's public works, relief, and related programs, the author states, did not emerge from an integrated economic policy, but from the fact that "hunger is not debatable." In 1933, the alternative to Roosevelt was revolution. However, the closing pages of the diary's first volume record the stentorian insistence of the same industrialists in 1936 that the New Deal was "creeping socialism" and bringing "America to the very brink of national bankruptcy."

The Secretary of the Interior was a compulsive combatant. He engaged in perpetual guerrilla warfare with other Cabinet

ASHER LANS practices law in New York City. He was formerly a lecturer at Brooklyn College, Hunter College and the College of the City of New York.

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members, in battles for the control of the public works program and the allocation of agencies within the government. He was almost always embroiled with his own chief subordinates. However, by some trick of dissociation, Ickes' pugnacity did not truncate his interest in the character of his associates. *The Secret Diary* brings to life and partially restores to reputation such forgotten leaders as Garner, Dern, Cummings and Frank Walker. Still more instructive is the description of the role played by the White House secretariat and executive assistants in shaping policy by controlling access to the President. Like many others, Ickes found that the best avenue of disinterested approach to FDR was through the President's confidential secretary, Marguerite LeHand.

However, as a chronicle of official Washington under Roosevelt, *The Secret Diary* is on the whole a dull and uninformative record. Too much space is devoted to unrefined ore—the minutiae of Ickes' social activities and the details of local public works projects. The author is always preoccupied with his own statements and his own reactions. His principal comment on a meeting at which the devaluation of the dollar was decided is a statement of annoyance at the garrulousness of the Cabinet member who sat on his left. The most serious defect stems from the very direct and essentially simple-minded nature of Ickes' approach to political and administrative problems. He seems totally unable to understand the motivations and the operational techniques of more complex personalities.

Consider, for example, the large portion of this book which describes the struggle between Hopkins and Ickes. From Ickes' standpoint the issue was simple. Roosevelt had differentiated between relief and construction projects; the former had been allotted to Hopkins, the latter to Ickes. Therefore, WPA should restrict itself to leaf-raking. In practice, the line of demarcation between relief and public works inevitably became a question of mere fiat. Ickes' construction projects were usually better planned; he was extraordinarily cost-conscious, and produced more for the money. However, his programs got under way with intolerable slowness, in large part because he insisted on retaining detailed control of all projects. Hopkins was more slipshod, but he understood how to delegate authority. He was capable of quickly creating employment for many men on relatively important work and under surprisingly efficient conditions.

From a superficial standpoint, Roosevelt's handling of the controversy seems inexplicable. He never squarely resolved the issue. He placated Ickes through flattery and by devisal of an infinite variety of compromises and co-ordination programs, all designed to give the Secretary of the Interior the appearance of being the sole Public Works Administrator and all ultimately resulting in the perpetuation of shared control.

(*Continued on page 246*)

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(*Continued from page 238*)

Of course Roosevelt was not merely being devious. The President found both his subordinates useful. He generally sought to create competition among subordinates by leaving amorphous divisions of power between them. He stimulated ambition and therefore harder work with half-promises of advancement which he found it inexpedient to fulfill.

To Roosevelt's many-sided mind, statesmanship was the art of making the necessary possible. He played politics on all levels because he knew that otherwise his programs would fail. His reactions were as often intuitive as intellectual.

The Secret Diary recites some of the facts which exhibited these characteristics, but it exhibits very little understanding of the processes of government. The present book is flat when contrasted with Frances Perkins' *The Roosevelt I Knew* or with Sherwood's *Roosevelt and Hopkins*. It is honest without having perspective, and it fails to convey any sense of the complexity of making representative government work effectively in an age of crises.

Brief Comments

THE TEMPER OF WESTERN EUROPE. By Crane Brinton. *Harvard. $2.50.*

This book is the result of the author's personal observations in Europe in 1952-1953. Professor Brinton finds much evidence for optimism: the increase in production and national incomes over prewar levels; the rising birth rate; the slow functional trend toward federation; the persistence of the European heritage of creativity, pluralism, "multanimity," and government by discussion. The mixed economy and the welfare state have not impaired the ability to invent, to improve, to work effectively. The attitudes and values of the Enlightenment, enriched by the modern awareness of the importance of the non-rational, survive. In spite of his sober optimism, the author is concerned about the long-run effects on the European economy of the anti-imperialist revolutions and the autarkic and neo-mercantilistic nationalism of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. The book is informal, witty, urbane and full of wise allusions which affirm the conservative continuity of the historical process.

FIRE IN THE ASHES: Europe in Mid-Century. By Theodore H. White. *Sloane. $5.00.*

In reviewing European events of the past six years and the intricate network of cause and effect which created them, Theodore White has again shown his skill as an observer, analyst and reporter. Mr. White avoids the luxury of speculation as to the outcome of the stories of Pierre Bertaux, Willi Schlieker and Joe Curry—men shaped by and capable of shaping their time. Instead, he gives his attention to the political, economic and sociological facts of life as seen in the ambivalent relationship of Europe and America. He urges that America get on with its most important maturation process—the co-ordination of its traditional concept of the crusade and its practical experience of the deal.

MODERN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY. By Werner Levi. *Minnesota. $5.50.*

An up-to-date analysis of China's foreign policy during the past century, based on painstaking research on Chinese patterns of thought and action, Mr. Levi's work is a valuable reference book for those who are already conversant with the affairs of China. Although the reasoning may not be entirely appealing to a Chinese mind, the conclusions are, on the whole, accurate, and the generalizations are kept to a minimum. An analytical evaluation of China's internal developments as determinants of her foreign policy has seldom been made. Despite the magnitude of the undertaking and the fact that Levi has not used the sources in the Chinese language, the book succeeds in being remarkably informative, candid and objective—a rarity in current literature on China.

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THE CHINA TANGLE: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission. By Herbert Feis. *Princeton. $6.00.*

The pervading tone of this account of American policy in China from 1941 to 1946, during the war and the critical peace-making period, is tragic—not because of any deliberate slanting on the author's part (he shows remarkable restraint in his treatment of these controversial matters), but because of the outcome of the well-intentioned hopes and plans, the disillusionment and maze of cross-purposes. Says Mr. Feis: "I have not sought . . . either to console or condemn. But . . . I greatly hope that . . . just understanding of what occurred and why . . . will reconcile us in the task ahead of redeeming our purposes in China."

HOW RUSSIA IS RULED. By Merle Fainsod. *Harvard. $7.50.*

This contribution to the Russian Research Center Studies is an impressively complete, carefully annotated, up-to-date picture of monolithic, naked power in action. The author analyzes the origins and gradual changes in the Bolshevik revolution; the establishment of party machinery and one-man rule; the growth and function of such instruments as the constitution, Soviets, bureaucracy, police and armed forces; the effect on farm and factory of the policy of incentives, indoctrination, repression and terror. The appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system will not encourage the hope that it is about to decay from within.

RUSSIAN ASSIGNMENT. By Leslie C. Stevens. Illustrated. *Little, Brown. $5.75.*

Admiral Stevens, naval attaché during Bedell Smith's—and briefly during Alan G. Kirk's—ambassadorship to Russia, has given us the most vivid picture we have of the way Russian people live today. With a knowledge of the language, the history, the art and even the political theories of Russia, and with a fundamental liking and sympathy for its people, he found his years in Moscow rewarding, often exasperating, sometimes heartbreaking. This is a sensitive, human, delightfully written observation of Russia, vast land of contrasts.

CHRISTIANITY, DIPLOMACY AND WAR. By Herbert Butterfield. *Abingdon-Cokesbury. $1.75.*

Mr. Butterfield, professor of modern history at Cambridge University, says here more succinctly, but with his usual thoughtful grace, what he has been saying in most of his recent writing: the Anglo-American nations must not get themselves involved in a "war of righteousness"—cold or hot—against Russia. The author is a sincere Christian, a British moderate, a skillful and well-trained historian; and though in a sense he is a "neutralist," it is quite clear from this book that he has no bitterness even toward American crusaders. This is a book that will annoy many readers in this country, hearten some, and should make all think a little harder.

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY: The Second World War. Volume VI. By Winston S. Churchill. *Houghton Mifflin. $6.00.*

Sir Winston Churchill's monumental account of the Second World War closes with this volume, which is written with the usual Churchillian color, phrasing and spirit, as well as a wealth of documentation.

In the "Triumph," the anxiety of the dark, dismal days of Dunkirk and Pearl Harbor, the nervous apprehension of the turning points at El Alamein, Stalingrad and Midway have been replaced by the collective power of the Grand Alliance, finally unleashed against Germany and her allies.

The "Tragedy" is the behind-the-scenes story of Russia's violations of pledges, of her treachery and ever-increasing desire for the political and economic control of her neighbors.

JAMES MADISON: Secretary of State, 1800-1809. By Irving Brant. *Bobbs-Merrill. $6.00.*

This book is the fourth that Mr. Brant has written about his hero. In it, Madison's relationship to our history is told from

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the defeat of Burr in 1800 through the Embargo of 1807 and associated diplomatic events. It is a chronicle of Jefferson's number one boy, who as Secretary of State—and this is the author's central theme—acted more independently and on his own initiative than Henry Adams has led us to believe. As with the first three volumes, this one is done with such loving patience and crowded with such immense detail as to suggest that the fifth volume—the story of Madison as President—may prove to be a scholarly anticlimax.

A STILLNESS AT APPOMATTOX. By Bruce Catton. *Doubleday. $5.00.*

Completing the trilogy begun in *Mr. Lincoln's Army* and *Glory Road*, this volume relates the grim, heroic epic of the Army of the Potomac in the last year of the Civil War. There are unforgettable pictures here (wounded men burning to death in the Wilderness), little studies (quality of draftees), poignant vignettes (Negro troops singing before Petersburg), wise comments (on prisons). Successfully presenting both the problems of command and the individual human experiences, Catton writes with authority, understanding, and a notable compassion for the fighting men, whose letters and journals provide much of the color and drama in this swiftly moving narrative.

CHEYENNE AUTUMN. By Mari Sandoz. Illustrated. *McGraw-Hill. $4.50.*

Miss Sandoz, who eighteen years ago in *Old Jules* told the story of her father and her own pioneer youth in Nebraska, now with poignant realism brings home a dark spot in American history, when a few hundred Cheyenne Indians, hounded, hunted, and waylaid by thousands of soldiers, fled from a captivity that had brought them starvation and sickness of body and heart. The time is short—from the fall of 1878 to the end of the following winter, the distance long—a trek of two thousand harsh miles between a guarded reservation camp in Oklahoma to the mouth of the Powder River on the Yellowstone.

ACADEMIC PROCESSION: An Informal History of the American College, 1636-1953. By Ernest Earnest. *Bobbs-Merrill. $4.00.*

Mr. Earnest defines the purpose of *Academic Procession* as "to examine the major forces which have operated in American higher education and to evaluate the colleges of each period on the pragmatic basis of the extent to which they educated men and women to live and earn a living in the world of their times." In a book which is sometimes witty and generally remarkably lively reading, he has succeeded very well. In looking at college students, their manners and mores, as well as what they studied, Mr. Earnest has also given the reader a refreshing view of American social history.

EDUCATIONAL WASTELANDS: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools. By Arthur E. Bestor. *Illinois. $3.50.*

"The charge which this book advances is that professional educationists, in their policy-making role, have lowered the aims of American public schools," Mr. Bestor says plainly in the first chapter of his hard-punching and well-documented statement. There is a freshness in the point of view that teacher illiteracy should be of more concern than loyalty. However, the ultimate constructive value of this critique will greatly depend upon the attitudes and activities of its readers who are able to consider the American public school system as an unsatisfactory by-product rather than a preconceived plot.

VERMONT TRADITION: The Biography of an Outlook on Life. By Dorothy Canfield Fisher. *Little, Brown. $4.50.*

This intensely personal book is interpretive history. The facts of Vermont's past are well known, but Mrs. Fisher puts human flesh on their dry bones. She is attempting to tell us, in terms of people living then and now, what it all means. "What I pray I may have skill to do is to see how Vermont history shaped, molded and created Vermont character." She adds, "I warn you that, in honesty, the title of this book should read, 'What Vermont Tradition Means to Me.'"

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A joy to read, it is also controversial. It may be sometimes romanticized and over-optimistic. You can argue with this book, yet I don't believe future writing of any depth about Vermont will be possible without taking it into account. Mrs. Fisher's *Tradition*, Vermont or otherwise, is a contribution to the whole American understanding.

CIRCLE OF THE SEASONS: The Journal of a Naturalist's Year. By Edwin Way Teale. Illustrated with photographs by the author. *Dodd, Mead. $4.00.*

Mr. Teale, who recently followed the spring from Florida to Mount Washington, now stays home for a year and writes the day-by-day diary of a naturalist. Though insects are his specialty, he knows almost as much about the ways of plants and other animals, and he turns up with an interesting reflection on the few days when nothing noteworthy is seen. The result is a book full of both information and the kind of wisdom which comes to some when they learn to see nature as a whole. It is fine either to dip into or to read straight through.

THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS. By Joseph Wood Krutch. Illustrated. *Sloane. $3.00.*

Mr. Krutch introduces us in these warm and informal essays to his country retreat in Connecticut; to his frogs, birds and cats (with whom he achieves varying degrees of communication); and to the ever-changing and mysterious processes of the green world around us. He sometimes jumps from observation to generalization with the daring (and the skill) of a trapeze artist. But although one may not always accept his conclusions in these essays about animal, vegetable and mineral matters, one is persuaded that these are matters well worth pondering over, and that Mr. Krutch is, as always, a very delightful essayist.

THE WORD ON THE BRAZOS. By J. Mason Brewer. Foreword by J. Frank Dobie. Illustrated. *Texas. $3.50.*

Good religion, bad religion, the threat of Hell and the hope of Heaven were of primary importance to the Negroes who lived in the bottom lands and along the banks of the Texas Brazos River during the latter part of the nineteenth century. And the man who "put on de armuh of de Lawd," who chose to interpret "the Word" (the Bible) to the community received the critical but good-natured scrutiny of his followers. In collecting these fifty-six tales told by and about Brazos Bottoms preachers, J. Mason Brewer has made a valuable contribution to the preservation of authentic American folklore.

THE WORLD'S RIM: Great Mysteries of the North American Indians. By Hartley Burr Alexander. Foreword by Clyde Kluckhohn. *Nebraska. $4.75.*

Philosopher, poet and anthropologist Hartley Burr Alexander united all his talents and sympathies in the writing of this posthumously published work. It is a series of studies in a field in which he was eminently qualified: certain ceremonies and ritual conceptions, "dramatic mysteries," of the North American Indians. Their wider interpretation, in terms of a philosophy of religious culture, shows the Indian heritage and achievement at its best. In rich, vivid and intensely poetic language, the author conveys the Indian understanding of "the dynamic particularity of men's lives," and gives new emphasis and meaning to the phrase "a common humanity."

WILD FLOWERS OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA AND THE UPPER OHIO BASIN. Text by O. E. Jennings. Illustrated by Andrey Avinoff. Two volumes. *Pittsburgh. $60.00 the set.*

Western Pennsylvania is a botanical borderland, where the balsam fir of the North meets the short-leaved pine of the South, where the coneflower of the Midwestern prairies joins the wild flowers of the Eastern coast. A scholar and an artist have united to make a handsome and valuable record of its wild flora. In one volume Dr. Jennings furnishes elaborate and conscientious notes on the characteristics and distribution of thousands of species of plants

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found in the area—a life work. In another volume Andrey Avinoff provides paintings of 253 plants reproduced in 200 color plates which show the accuracy of the collector and the imaginative eye of the artist.

BOSWELL ON THE GRAND TOUR: Germany and Switzerland, 1764. Edited by Frederick A. Pottle. *McGraw-Hill. $5.00.*

This third installment of the private papers of James Boswell, in the selective reading edition, is less sensational than the best-selling *London Journal of 1762-3*, but will be read with even greater interest by confirmed Boswellians. The happy hypochondriac of these pages no longer patterns his personality after that of other men. "I am really an original character," he announces. "Let me moderate and cultivate my originality." It is in this spirit that he moves among the courts of Germany and in this spirit that he encounters Rousseau and Voltaire. Boswell never elaborated the great experience at Ferney into a finished work of art, but the journal entries, the letters and the memoranda relating to it bring us close to the reality. Here and elsewhere the editor has handled his materials with much skill. The journal, already available in a limited edition, is elaborately annotated. The other documents, largely unpublished, will appear in full in a research edition of the Boswell papers now in preparation at Yale.

FREEDOM AND FATE: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson. By Stephen E. Whicher. *Pennsylvania. $4.75.*

"To reject Emerson utterly is to reject mankind": the honesty and conviction of this study are suggested by its last sentence. Mr. Whicher traces the movement of Emerson's thought from his first almost incredible rebellion against the world in the name of the Soul, through his difficulties with skepticism (particularly well described), to his final optimistic acceptance of things as they are. Both the rebellion and the acceptance are most difficult to do justice to; they have been rejected often enough in recent years. Yet to reject them, as Mr. Whicher shows, is to close our ears to the compelling power of a genuine voice. But this book is not an apology; it is the clearest, most scrupulous account yet written of the American Sage.

SOUTHERN RENASCENCE: The Literature of the Modern South. Edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs. *Johns Hopkins. $5.00.*

These twenty-nine essays on the literature and culture of the South are loosely held together by certain premises: that the South, having lost the War Between the States, has a sense of tragedy; that the South is an agrarian economy, and that this implies many virtues unavailable to the North; that the recent flowering of Southern literature implies a general superiority of the Southern way of life. In the framework of such attitudes, we are given essays on Allen Tate, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and—one of the best—Erskine Caldwell; essays on Southern history and literature. New York City is repeatedly referred to with the reluctant deference with which medieval monks must have spoken of the Scarlet Woman.

SELECTED WORKS OF SACHEVERELL SITWELL. *Bobbs-Merrill. $4.00.*

The youngest of the senior Sitwells has chosen fourteen rich selections from eight of his some forty-three published volumes, a lavish cross section of his omnivorous and painstaking endeavor. Mr. Sitwell gives a clue to his life and work when he writes in his introduction: "It is my belief that I have informed myself of nearly all works of art in the known world. I cannot think that anything considerable is missing. Where I have not been in person, I have read and studied. I have heard most of the music of the world, and seen nearly all of the paintings." And this astounding statement is confirmed by his prodigious output. Sacheverell Sitwell is a man of unique taste and self-education, an authentic eclectic, a revitalizer of the past, an animator of the present as seen by that past.

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But most of all, he is a poet deeply concerned with life and the art of living it.

COLLECTED POEMS. By Conrad Aiken. *Oxford. $10.50.*

Among these thousands of lines of verse, all worked with meticulous craftsmanship to evoke music and to elaborate certain associations of ideas, occasionally there are lines which draw the reader into an inevitable experience. Too often Mr. Aiken seems to be improvising, talking about things instead of creating them. When his eye is on the world, as in *Brownstone Eclogues,* he is an exciting poet; when his eye is turned inward, as in *The Divine Pilgrim,* he is virtually unreadable. This volume is valuable for the student of literature; the general reader would be advised to read Mr. Aiken in selection.

GARDENERS AND ASTRONOMERS. By Edith Sitwell. *Vanguard. $2.75.*

This seems a far cry from the poetry of Miss Sitwell's early years. Although her verse still retains its golden ring and delights with its rich humor and sensuous imagery, these poems do more than beguile the senses or create a mood. The poet's concern herein is deeply philosophical: the mystery and glory of Being, the power and vitality of organic nature, and the straits in which man finds himself today, insofar as he has been seduced into accepting himself as a mechanized being in a machine world. Miss Sitwell voices both a protest and a credo in *Gardeners and Astronomers,* and she reveals much power as well as brilliance and freshness of poetic creation.

THE PRESENT AND THE PAST. By Ivy Compton-Burnett. *Messner. $3.50.*

In this ironic comedy, as in all her novels, Ivy Compton-Burnett makes unusual claims on the attention of the reader; for her characters are rendered through speech rather than through action or commentary, and the conversation is glancing, witty, intense and broken. Only when fitted like pieces into a mosaic does it reveal its significance. Love in all its aspects is the basic theme of the novel: the father, the husband, a first and second wife, five vitally perceptive children and the servant are all revealed in the light of their relationship to this theme. It is well worth the concentration it demands of a reader who would savor it properly.

THE LYING DAYS. By Nadine Gordimer. *Simon & Schuster. $3.95.*

"The lying days of my youth"—from Yeats—are the growing-up days of Helen Shaw, who is the heroine of this perceptive novel out of South Africa. There is a succession of decisive experiences with playmates, at home and on visits, and with older people in Johannesburg. You have read novels in which color was the theme, or adolescence, first love, class distinction. Working these and other elements together, Miss Gordimer presents a richer, profounder picture on a broader canvas. Vividly you note her scenes; you follow the action eagerly. Most of all, however, you are impressed not with her craftsmanship, but with her grasp of character and her knowledge of the multitude of gestures, tones, facial expressions and idiosyncrasies by which character is revealed and identified.

LOVE IS A BRIDGE. By Charles Bracelen Flood. *Houghton Mifflin. $3.75.*

From the First World War to the Second, from one Harvard generation to the next . . . that's the generous span of this novel; and the space between is full of the story of the Cobbs, Henry and Susan. In a country-club, Back-Bay, Catholic milieu, they marry, have a child, and divorce. Flood makes his settings and his people real, though not quite important enough. Written on a Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship, this first novel testifies to the young author's perceptiveness, taste and other qualities, but it is a bit lacking in urgency.

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The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles which have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *Phi Beta Kappa Hall, Williamsburg, Va., and should not exceed 300 words in length except on request. Because of limitations of space, we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*—EDITOR.

Freedom and Loyalty

The article "Loyalty and Freedom" by Archibald MacLeish in the Autumn, 1953, edition of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR impresses me very favorably but I still think that any person who has joined an organization which has for its objective the forceful overthrow of our government should be removed from public office or teaching position, for thereby only can we insure freedom for future generations.

EDWARD H. OCHSNER
Chicago, Illinois

★ ★ ★

Archibald MacLeish's article in the Autumn, 1953, issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, entitled "Loyalty and Freedom," prompts me to give my reasons why the inevitable crises he predicts can and will be avoided by the American people: the universal belief of man in man precludes any possibility of one emotional need overbalancing another to the extent that our underlying structure might collapse, even though in the last few years that danger seems to have become both real and present. Our seeming loss of faith in freedom is the result of our apparent loss of faith in man, due largely to neglect or failure of our institutions of learning to cultivate the mind of man along human lines. Our schools and universities should include the study of man in their curriculum, as on earth there is nothing great but man, and in man there is nothing great but mind. Personal success consists of having an ideal and working aim of life that patterns good and seeks communion with God.

In the struggle for the defense of human freedom, everyone should have developed within himself a generous nature, an open mind, the philosophy of patience and courage, faith in self and in his fellows, and an awareness of the rightness of the eternal laws, which will make him a greater victor than Bonaparte or Caesar. For such a true and lofty victor over self is capable of valuing and defending freedom.

OLIVER E. BARTHEL
Detroit, Michigan

★ ★ ★

Thank you for David Riesman's "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom" [AS: Winter, 1953-54]. Too many intellectuals have spent valuable time and effort —not in thinking about the problem of intellectual freedom—but in "emoting" about it, engaging in incantation, and in quoting Jefferson, Milton, Mill, etc. Quotation and tradition have their uses but they can be overdone—particularly when they stand in the way of analysis of a current condition.

I have had some practical experience with the problem of intellectual freedom. I would say that much of it can be found in Mr. Riesman's "rural or small-town location" and "small colleges in fundamentalist or reactionary communities"; it can be found also in our national concept of the role and importance of trustees of public institutions. However, most intellectuals who are articulate about the problem appear too "mad" or hysterical to understand that. And so far as trustees are concerned, not only do the "professors" seem uninterested in carrying these important middlemen along with them, but there have been uncontradicted professorial statements to

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the effect that trustees are useless appendages anyway, and that practicing intellectuals ought to "go it alone."

Or let me put our dilemma another way: Many a Joe Blow, back in the provinces, has a strong feeling that he knows some of the workings of American democracy a little better than Professor Einstein (and who is to assume, categorically, that he doesn't?), but he has a much more difficult time being articulate and making his voice heard on the subject.

PAUL BIXLER
Antioch College
Yellow Springs, Ohio

★ ★ ★

David Riesman's brilliant article in the Winter issue, "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom," has performed one great service for his cause—it has pointed out what has so often been forgotten: the liberals are winning their battle.

But regardless of the soundness of his argument for open-mindedness, regardless of his convincing presentation of stultifying liberal conformity, Riesman has overplayed his hand and the implications of his argument inevitably leave his position weaker than when he started.

In the first place, the conformity of liberals (or of any group) is obviously productive of stagnation—when it is conformity as to specific positions or viewpoints. But the liberal conformity which Riesman has actually objected to is not this type of conformity—it is a conformity as to method, an eternal conformity through which new possibilities for nonconformity are opened.

The united front of liberalism, which Riesman attacks, is not a united front for liberal politics or liberal religion—it is a united front for freedom to choose liberal or conservative politics, liberal or conservative religion. While a certain amount of narrow-minded optimism pervades this latter united front (for it is felt that it will inevitably produce the former), the possibility of liberals' not adhering to it is an appalling thought.

Secondly, Riesman adopts essentially the "aberration theory" so popular with today's anti-anti-intellectuals. "America has always had its aberrations," this school points out. "Look at the K.K.K., Huey Long, the Know-Nothings—where did they get?"

This point of view is soothing, certainly, but it also breeds complacency. The inevitable conclusion must be that withdrawal to the ivory tower, assuring one's fellow liberals that truth will out eventually, is the proper method of combat—to argue with McCarthyites is to give them a dignity they do not deserve.

But battles are not won by standing on one's dignity and the obvious superiority of one's position. While the American people have innate dignity and a sense of justice, these feelings are only effective when aroused.

ROSS D. WETZSTEON
Ithaca, New York

★ ★ ★

That Mr. Riesman did an admirable analytical job in his article, "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom," seems unquestionable to this reader. THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is to be congratulated for having published it.

What does seem questionable is Mr. Riesman's apparent conclusion that the evil of McCarthyism is best fought, or minimized, by ignoring it. When an evil gets to be as sizable as McCarthyism, a cavalier disregard of its existence can hardly be considered the proper therapy.

As eminent an authority as Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas has this to say regarding the size of the evil:

> Anxieties and suspicions are aroused until a community does not know what to believe or whom to trust, until even old neighbors suspect one another. More and more people conclude that the one safe thing to do is to conform: either to stand silent or to join the hunt. [*New York Times*, November 25, 1953.]

Mr. MacLeish's thesis that McCarthyism should be fought with the battle-axe of Milton's rhetoric may be debatable. Perhaps the rapier of a Molière or a Shaw would be a better weapon. But, whether with rapier or battle-axe, McCarthyism should certainly be combated.

Mr. Riesman's reliance on the efficacy of

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mere analysis, coupled with his supercilious disregard of the need for taking positive countervailing action, has the deceptive attraction of an easy formula for optimism.

GARIBALDI LAGUARDIA
Santurce, Puerto Rico

★ ★ ★

In his reply to Mr. Riesman in the Winter, 1953-54, number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Mr. MacLeish says, "As for McCarthyism . . . it is precisely in the continuing struggle against it . . . that effective freedom consists." As a general proposition that statement is, I believe, simply untrue. Effective freedom for most Americans does not consist in any such negative attitude toward a minor phase of the attempt to hold down a certain type of crime. Where is Mr. MacLeish's sense of proportion? Is the man who tosses a little sneeze powder at a party a major menace to the national health? It might even be in the long run that normal American citizens as a whole, through Mr. McCarthy's activities, will preserve more freedom than they will lose.

In the interest of semantic symmetry may I be allowed to suggest that Trumanism and MacLeishism are not altogether devoid of potential danger to this country?

PAUL W. MERRILL
Altadena, California

★ ★ ★

What fun! A good egghead debate.

There is real hope for Mr. Riesman, the immature author of "Values in Context" [AS: Winter, 1952-53], as he attempts higher things, like laughing, in his "Some Observations on Intellectual Freedom." I would suggest, if he intends to pursue his course further, that he study today's master, Walt Kelly, who suspects there is more to the human animal than mere intelligence.

A. MacLeish might enjoy Pogo more than Mr. Riesman, for he seems to recognize and accept the "dualism" in the human personality which makes Pogo go to the world series when he wants to do something serious.

I can't take sides with either Mr. Riesman or Mr. MacLeish, because I'm afraid I'm one of those mass Americans who teach Sunday school just to keep things lively for the sociologists who decry the sad case of "American Dualism." I enjoy joining the clergy in fanning the flames of Absolute Truth. I always thought the Absolute was what intellectual curiosity was seeking.

PHYLLIS B. HAYES
Indianapolis, Indiana

The New Intellectuals and the Old Coterie

After two years of reading your publication, I have come to the realization that it is *not* "A Quarterly for the Independent Thinker," but simply a publication of and for a small, stagnant remnant of a united front of eggheads. Article after article pounds the same two bugaboos, McCarthy and "anti-intellectualism," in monotonous repetition. THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR contains as much diversity on basic issues as a collection of papers by scholastics debating the question of how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. All the basic premises —the goodness of the Democrats; the venality of the Republicans; the driven-snow innocence of all "intellectuals" who have been confronted with any accusation, well-founded or not; the fact that unfavorable European opinions of us are always justified—all these things are as much taken for granted as the scholastics' belief in God.

The SCHOLAR, in its atmosphere of ivory-tower detachment, does not seem to realize that there are a great many intellectuals who found Stevenson's speeches sadly lacking in depth and sincerity, and the man himself much quicker with a quip than an original idea. There are a great many intellectuals who regard taking refuge behind the Fifth Amendment as rank cowardice, and feel that those who misuse the Amendment in that way are doing a great disservice to all educated people. But the main thing which the SCHOLAR's editors and contributors should realize is that they are not speaking for the new generation of intellectuals who are trying to teach and be taught, influence and be influenced at the grass-roots level. The old coterie, which is represented almost exclusively in your pages, is a discredited one in their eyes. You

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do not speak for the new intellectuals any more than the *Daily Worker* speaks for the laboring man of this country, and unless you introduce more healthy diversity into your publication, you will lose all the respect of the younger generation. They would appreciate more Viereck and less MacLeish.

JOHN L. ARRINGTON, JR.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Cloth of Criticism

This is in appreciation of "Souls Among Masterpieces" [AS: Winter, 1953-54]. Professor Douglas is the child who views the work of the pseudo-weavers, takes a good, hard look and yells: But he has nothing on!

WILBERT A. STEVENS
Mystic, Connecticut

A Worthy Crack

I cannot beat down the urge to write you a note about those two particularly able and brilliantly written articles in your Winter, 1953-54, issue, "Education for Privacy" and "The Loud-Voiced Victory"; and I feel most unfortunate in never having met either Mr. ten Hoor or Mr. Cort personally.

Both writers have taken a worthy crack (Mr. ten Hoor might not admit this!) at the ignorant, and against the arrogance of the ignorant—a thing which has been growing too fast in our country, and indeed elsewhere. It is fortunate, though perhaps slightly paradoxical, that as ignorance is overcome by intellectual growth, the arrogance generally tapers off. Whether this be paradox or not, let us have more of it. As never before, we need the decency that comes with wisdom, intelligence, breeding, understanding—not only for our individual selves but at least a few others also.

Mr. ten Hoor, I presume, is not too concerned about being in the weekly news (a magazine known as *Time*). But we are glad to see it, except that no mention was made of the close connection between THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR and Phi Beta Kappa. Can we not stay aristocratic, as I am sure Mr. Cort agrees we should, and still be a wee bit publicity-minded?

R. W. DANIELS
Washington, D. C.

A Limited View

"Man is the measure of things" is what Max Eastman's article in the Winter, 1953-54 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR on "The Cardinal Virtues" seems to say. I just happen not to believe it, although I am not a supernaturalist.

Growth, Mr. Eastman says, is man's salvation. But from what source do men get their power to grow? Is not man a created thing as well as a creator? It seems strange to me that unprovincial men should come to believe in what seems to me a provincial view that man is an orphan in the universe —which interpreted means, I suppose, that whatever is back of man is dead. What evidence is there that that is dead?

I believe with Mr. Eastman that the virtues do not require *supernatural* sanctions. But I still believe in God, and I am not expecting that God will die. In other words, I believe that something great and good has been operative in the universe, that it still is operative, and that no mortal has sufficient evidence to conclude that through time and beyond it won't continue to be operative. In this, I think, there is ground for hope; but Mr. Eastman rules out hope and substitutes growth—in my judgment, a lesser virtue.

Mr. Eastman also rules out faith. He would "suspend judgment until facts are known." But *all* the facts can't be known when man is finite. Therefore, Mr. Eastman would at times *exclude* judgment and not just suspend it. But man is crippled at such times if he is not free to walk—that is, to form judgments—in part by faith.

Mr. Eastman may change, since he advocates growth and open-mindedness. Some time ago, W. T. Stace wrote "Man Against Darkness" for the *Atlantic Monthly*. I understand he now no longer believes that man's condition is that bad.

O. E. TURPIN
Omaha, Nebraska

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